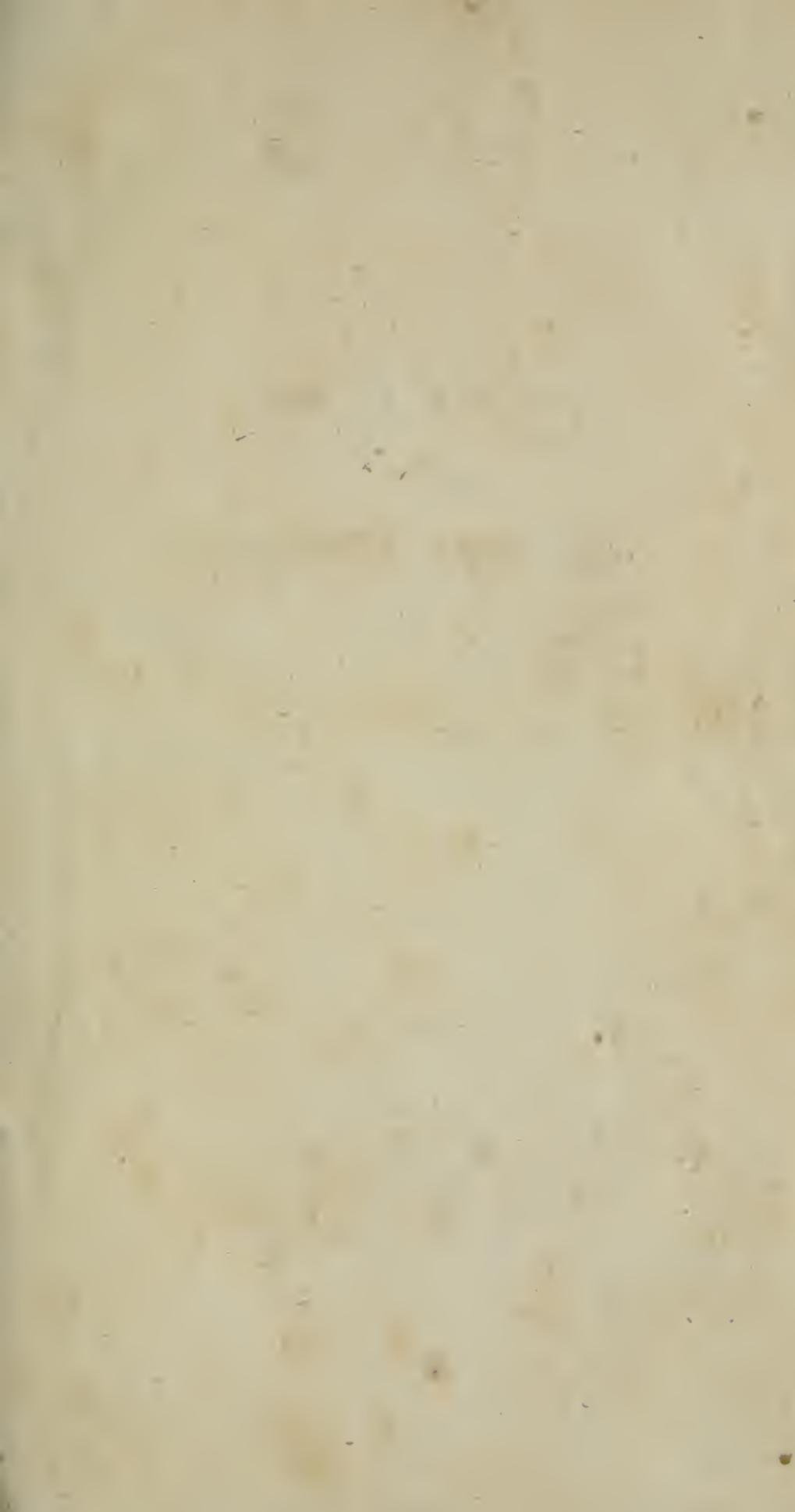


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# **DOMESTIC SCENES.**

**VOL. II.**

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# DOMESTIC SCENES.

A Novel.

*IN THREE VOLUMES.*

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By LADY HUMDRUM,

AUTHOR OF MORE WORKS THAN BEAR HER NAME.

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Tedious the tale with lengthen'd lectures fraught :  
We're less by precept than example taught.

ANONYMOUS.

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VOL. II.

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## DOMESTIC SCENES.

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### CHAPTER I.

THE change in the face of affairs in the Belmont family gave so natural a colour to the visit of Lady Sabina's brother at the Park, that Sophia paid little attention to the circumstance, when told of Lord Leonard Ormsby's arrival there. The absence of Mrs. Villars she considered as a decided check to all intercourse; forgetting her father's total disregard of forms of any kind, when not put in mind of them.

The return of Henry was an agreeable surprise, and the reports he had to make of the invalids so very satisfactory, that

the thoughts both of father and daughter were wholly engrossed with the delightful expectation of seeing Mrs. Villars and Emily restored to perfect health in the spring.

When Mr. Villars heard Lord Leonard was again at hand, “ Well, Hal !” he cried, “ let’s have as much of him here as we can. I like that young man : he’ll make a figure in the House on the right side of the question. Give him a general invitation to dinner, whenever he can get away from the Belmont’s ; — I wish to talk over matters with him a little.”

Sophia being out of the way when this was said, there was no check to Henry’s acting upon it ; which he did with due celerity. Lord Leonard of course was not slow in availing himself of so promising an opening. The first day, he could not decently avoid dining with his hosts, but on the following morning he attended the Priory breakfast-table, and, with a look of gratitude to Mr. Villars,

“ proposed to himself the pleasure of making one at his hospitable board, at five.” Mr. Villars gave him a hearty shake with the left hand in token of acceptance, the right being disabled by gout; and immediately broached his favourite topic, which led them deep into state affairs.

Sophia was surprised, and a good deal displeased, with this apparent forwardness; and would have decidedly absented herself from the dinner-table, had it not been for the necessity, in her father’s present state, of cutting his food for him, which he did not like any one to do but herself. She withdrew from the apartment the moment breakfast ended, and resolved to do the same the instant the dessert should be removed.

An early visit from Laura, however, soon recalled her again to the library. Sophia held her in sovereign contempt for the art and insincerity of her character; was highly indignant at the part she suspected

her to have taken in regard to Charles, and fully aware, moreover, of her designs upon Henry. Not much in the habit of disguising her feelings at any time, she now entered with an awe-inspiring air she well knew how to assume, when either duplicity or profligacy obtruded themselves into her presence.

Laura, already disconcerted at finding Lord Leonard quietly established where she neither wished nor expected it, was now so petrified by the frigid reception she met with, that she could with difficulty rally her wonted smiles. She advanced, however, with a held-out hand, exclaiming, "My dear Mrs. Delmere, I am so overjoyed at the delightful accounts of our beloved Emily's recovered health and spirits, that I could not resist taking the liberty to call and congratulate you upon a more speedy restoration than we could almost have dared to hope for."

"You are very obliging, Madam," not seeming to see the proffered hand, "a

speedy restoration could only be unlooked-for by those who were not acquainted with the firmness and dignity of my sister's mind : I should have conceived you to have placed particular reliance on it." She was unconscious, in saying this, of Lord Leonard's presence : he had been stooping to look for a pamphlet in the lower book-shelves by Mr. Villars's direction, and was eclipsed by the high back of the Merlin chair.

"I assure you," returned Laura, "all possible justice is done in our family to her disinterested magnanimity, and nothing short of her example could have inspired Charles" —

Sophia, having at this moment perceived Lord Leonard, broke into her speech: "We will, if you please, call up a subject of more general interest. Do you know, my Lord, whether my brother was prepared for a ride? though, if you will have the goodness to touch the bell, we will at any rate send to him, that he

may not lose the honour accident so fortunately offers him of attending Miss Belmont."

This was uttered with a slight stress upon the word accident, that completed the discomfiture of Laura. Nothing could be more just than Sophia's interpretation of the visit; it had Henry solely in view, of whose return she had only heard from Lord Leonard the preceding day. She had been returned herself above a fortnight, without a thought of these friendly congratulations having occurred to her.

"Oh! is Mr. Villars here? I shall be very glad, I'm sure!" she uttered with an air so foolish and so unlike her accustomed self-possession, that Lord Leonard was struck with it, as well as with the extraordinary dryness of Mrs. Delmere's manner, so different from any thing he had yet seen.

"Villars and I had planned a ride,"

he replied, "and I was waiting till he should be equipped."

Before the servant could answer the bell, Henry made his appearance. The sight of him seemed to restore Laura's self-command. "How lucky," she cried, "that my mother insisted on my taking advantage of this first fine day since we have been down; a ride is so wonderfully improved by agreeable company—I depend both on yours and Lord Leonard's attendance, Mr. Villars."

"We had settled to wait upon you for that purpose," he answered: "Sophia, won't you join us?"

"I devote the early morning hours to Agatha," was the reply, "and only take my exercise when she can take it with me."

"Mrs. Delmere is the slave of her duties," said Laura.

"I claim no such merit; I simply follow my inclinations," she returned.

"May I then hope they will soon draw

you out of your retirement to favour us with your company at the Park?" Laura asked.

" Whenever I again venture into the world, I shall consider it as a duty to return the honour of this visit."

Laura, willing to display her amiable forbearance in a strong light to Henry, answered this dry speech with a depreciating look. " I must obtain your forgiveness before we part, Mrs. Delmere," she said, " for what I perceive you consider as an impertinent intrusion on your retirement; but the real fact is, that I took your removal to the Priory for a preliminary step to your return into the society of your friends, if not the world; and I was anxious to put in my claim to be considered in that light by the sister of my dear Emily. I shall, however, refrain from a repetition of my forwardness, till you are inclined to give it encouragement."

" You are very good, Miss Belmont:

be assured I see your motive in its true light, and am proportionably grateful. My leaving my cottage was merely to assist in nursing my father ; and I shall return to my seclusion the moment my mother comes back, with no immediate thoughts of further emerging from it."

Laura was effectually silenced. Casting her eye to the window, "There are the horses," she observed. The gentlemen only waited her commands, they said.

Mr. Villars, looking up from his newspaper, gave her such another nod as he had done at her entrance, adding, "Well, this was a very neighbourly call, Miss Belmont ; and here are females to make you welcome till the return of the absentees, so we shall always be glad to see you ; — and do spare Lord Leonard to us whenever you can, for though I lost no time in sending him a general invitation by Hal, if you spread your attractions, we shall not see half enough of him, and

we will make over Hal to you in his stead."

Laura gave some smiling indistinct answer; and taking her leave, without renewing the offer that had been overlooked at her entrance, she departed with her attendants.

"What a charming young lady she is," cried Katty, who had come in with Henry: "Well, I do hope, from the bottom of my heart, she will make an impression upon my nephew at last. How pretty of her to say what she did about Emily, and your friendship, and that!"

"Yes, she knows how to say pretty things; — but I have been kept a long time from Agatha, so don't let me be called down again this morning, dear aunt."

And Sophia left the room, satisfied with having given a decided repulse to Laura, as well as to find Lord Leonard exculpated, by what her father had said, from the forwardness she had imputed to

him : the general invitation was unlucky, but that she had not foreseen, and could not remedy ; she now, however, deemed it best to give no particular consequence to it, by making any change in her own conduct.

## CHAP. II.

"How very cold Mrs. Delmere's manners are!" said Laura.

"I never thought them so before this morning," Lord Leonard replied.

"Possibly they may be different to women from what they are to men," rejoined Laura: "is that the case, Mr. Villars?"

"I am endeavouring to recollect whether this may be the anniversary of any distressing event," said Henry, unconscious of Sophia's suspicions of Laura: "she certainly was particularly grave, but I can assign no cause for it."

"Are her inequalities always assignable to a cause?" Laura asked, with a sarcastic smile.

"Upon my word, I can as little accuse her of caprice as any body I ever knew," returned Henry.

"There is a natural openness and sincerity about her I never saw equalled," said Lord Leonard.

"A slight tincture of dissimulation might at times prove more agreeable though; what a contrast with the dear Emily!" cried Laura.

"Emily is the humble retiring violet," Henry observed, "unobtrusive of its sweets, but well repaying those who seek them."

"Whilst Mrs. Delmere," said Lord Leonard, animatedly, "is the towering spotless lily, offering its pure and lucid hue to the eye of day, the more dazzling the longer it is gazed on."

"How wonderous poetic!" exclaimed Laura: "here's fine turf for a gallop!" and off she set.

She did not give her resentment 'to the winds,' like the 'cares, doubts, and fears' of Whiskerandos; on the contrary, 'she nursed her wrath to keep it warm;' but the winds kindly befriended her by

quickly puffing away all betraying indications from her countenance, which was soon again dressed in smiles to be lavished, ah, how vainly ! on the insensible Henry.

On alighting, she said, in her sweetest manner, “ I am not to allow myself to propose your dining with us to-day, I know ; but keep in mind that Mr. Villars admits of Lord Belmont’s right to reprisals ; he will assuredly look for them to-morrow, whether Lord Leonard be again seduced from us or no.”

How long Henry might have continued secure against all the fascinating lures of which she was so complete a mistress, cannot very positively be asserted ; for, after all, he was not of adamant, and the softening influences of gentle zephyrs and purling streams are far better assistants to the feelings Laura sought to inspire, than balls and concerts in crowded London rooms ; but he gained so powerful a support from the explanation his sister had to give when he enquired into

the motives of her repulsive manner to Laura that morning, as ever after made him shrink from such hateful duplicity.

Mr. Villars, much pleased with his guest at dinner, appeared in better spirits and more free from suffering than he had been at any time since the departure of his wife ; Sophia also, relieved from the idea of Lord Leonard's intrusion's having any particular reference to herself, and much pleased with her success in foiling Laura, was uncommonly animated, so that the conversation took a very agreeable turn ; in the course of it Lord Leonard, having quoted some little poetical effusion of his elder brother's, Lord Cranmore, added, “ He will suit you perfectly, Villars : he's quite as much of a bookworm as yourself : I shall be impatient to make you acquainted : we expect him home shortly.”

“ Has he been long absent ? ”

“ Better than two years : he went abroad for his health, and soon recovered

it ; but he has since been pursuing literary researches, and *virtù* without end, in the Grecian Isles. I must forewarn you, though, that you may be more than once in company with him before you will be inclined to give him any credit beyond what the Frenchman was so struck with in his English friend, ‘*un beau talent pour le silence,*’ unless his travels may have polished him a little. He was the shyest of the shy, particularly in female company. If I should be allowed the happiness to present him to Mrs. Delmere, I must entreat her not to prejudge him.”

“ I think,” Sophia observed, “ the silence of a man who is unwilling to speak is very distinguishable from that of one who has nothing to say.”

“ There certainly is such a thing as intelligent silence,” replied Lord Leonard ; “ but it is not your every-day observer that will detect it. I might safely have rested his cause here, however.”

On their adjourning to coffee, Mr.

Villars challenged Lord Leonard to a game at chess: he was a most desirable antagonist; for, although fully equal in point of play, he lost many a game by letting his attention be drawn off to the slightest word that fell from Sophia.

On their beginning their game, she had brought out her portfolio to fill in a pencil sketch; and placed herself so as to have the command of the chess-board, by which means she also, unintentionally, got the entire command of Lord Leonard's thoughts, for he could not raise his eyes without their falling upon her.

Aunt Katty was busily employed in finishing some baby-linen for a poor woman in the village; and Henry having strayed to the farther end of the room, was solicited by Agatha to let her see some pretty prints. Having ‘the Lady of the Lake’ in his hand, he showed her *Loch Katt'rine*; — a perfect silence prevailed, when all at once the child eagerly exclaimed, “O, dear Henry! do you

know just here," pointing with her finger, "it is so like where I fell into the water at Rock Castle."

"What's that you say, Agatha?" cried Sophia.

"Oh! I didn't know you heard me, aunty.

"How came you never to tell me of your having had a fall into the water?"

"Because Sir Edward said I must not."

"Was Sir Edward with you when it happened?"

"O yes, aunty: t'was he took me out."

"Do come hither, my child, and let me hear how it happened."

"Why, I was riding on pony, and Tom Groom was riding with me; but he didn't much mind because he was getting blackberries, so I went along the narrow path by the side of the water; so pony wanted to drink, and so I was letting him, and Tom called to me not, because he would lie down; but I didn't hear what he said, because he was such a great way

off, all among the bushes on the top of the bank ; so, directly he called, Po lay down in the water, and rolled me off."

Sophia shuddered, and turned pale.

" Your Lordship is either out of practice," Mr. Villars observed somewhat pettishly, " or don't deem me worth setting your strength against ; you make no battle at all !"

" I beg your pardon, indeed !" replied Lord Leonard, " I could not help attending to the account of poor Miss Agatha's danger."

" What danger ?" enquired Mr. Villars, too much absorbed in the game to have heard one syllable of what had been saying just at his ear.

It was repeated to him.

" But you said Sir Edward Arundel took you out, Agatha ?" resumed Sophia : " where was *he* then ?"

" Why, he was somewhere higher up, on the bank a-reading ; but he didn't see me, but he heard Tom call, so then he looked, and he saw me kicking

and sprawling in the water ; and I could'nt scream, you know, because the water came all into my mouth so ; and then he came running and jumping from one place to another, for it was all rocks and stonesyou know, so that Tom could'nt get down ; and then he took me out ; and Tom said he wondered he did'nt break his neck, it was such a dangerous place."

Sophia drawing the child nearer, and hugging her to her breast, exclaimed, " O my darling ! little did I imagine how near I had been to losing you !"

" Well, it was very pretty of Sir Edward Arundel, I must say," cried Katty ; " but I'm afraid you got shockingly wet for all that."

" Yes that I did, but then he carried me in his arms to the house, and had me put to bed, and made it be warmed, and then he was so angry with Winny, but poor Winny couldn't help it tho': she cried very bad indeed when she saw what had happened ; for I had run away from her, for Tom to take me on Po without

the leading rein ; and she wouldn't have let me if she had known."

" And then Sir Edward forbade you to let me know it ?" said Sophia.

" No, not then, that was one day when I was a-going to have Betsy hold my hand to write to you, and then he said he would hold my hand himself, and that made me love him so, for being so good-natured ; and then he said, now we mustn't say any thing about falling into the water, for that would frighten aunt Delmere : she would always be thinking it might happen again."

" How very kind and considerate !" said Sophia ; " but he didn't forbid you to tell me when you came home ?"

" Yes he did afterwards : when we was on the road he said, ' We won't say one word of the story of the lake to Mrs. Delmere, my little Agg ;' so I said, ' why not ? it wouldn't frighten her now, you know ;' so he said, ' but it would get poor Winny anger, and he had been angry enough at

her himself ;' so I said, you wasn't never angry afterwards ;' so he said, 'but may be you would think you must thank him, and he shouldn't like you to thank him ; wasn't that very odd of him ?'

" He robbed me of a very great pleasure by it," said Sophia, a ray of animation overspreading her fine features.

" Dear me, yes ! and himself too, I think," cried Katty. So thought Lord Leonard, but not exactly in the sense that followed ; " for where's the use of doing a kindness, I should be glad to know," she continued, " if one isn't to be thanked for it ? I've no notion of that."

" A case of this sort might help one to some notion of the use, too !" Henry observed with a smile.

" But Katt's of opinion, you see, that the only reason for saving a child from drowning is the thanks you are to get for it," said Mr. Villars, drolling.

"No no, not so neither ; but thanks can do no harm that I see for all that."

Neither Sophia nor Lord Leonard spoke : their minds were full, hers with gratitude and strong approbation of Sir Edward's active kindness, and extreme delicacy ; and his with apprehension of the bias this might give in favour of one who had already occurred to his thoughts as a possible rival.

"Come!" cried Mr. Villars, "now let's have another game ; since little Agg is safe and sound here, we can all feel our obligation to Sir Edward without letting him spoil our sport."

"O, but I havn't told you the worst of all tho'," resumed Agatha ; "for, do you know, he made poor Tom be turned away!"

"That worst a good deal enhances the obligation from your account of Tom, Agatha," said Sophia, speaking more to her own feelings just then, than to the comprehension of the child.

" But I was very sorry, indeed ; for Winny wouldn't never let me go into the stables again, when there was a new groom ; and she said, Sir Edward had forbid her to let me."

" Well, do hold your little chatter about it now," said Mr. Villars : " Lord Leonard can't play a stroke for you : there's check-mate again ! — no glory in beating you to-night !" pushing the chess-board from him.

" No ! I fear I have tired your patience indeed ; not seeing when my pieces were in *prise* ; I am quite out of practice, and could'n't command my attention."

" It's always the effect of lookers on," returned Mr. Villars ; " but I'll tell you what we'll do to-morrow ; we'll have it all to ourselves in my study, and leave them to their prosings."

Had he happened to raise his eyes in saying this, he might have seen cause to conjecture that an uninterrupted game at chess was not the object nearest to

Lord Leonard's heart ; but they were rivetted on the check-mate he had just given, and he added, "I don't see, indeed, why we might not have our coffee sent to us there."

" I think, my dear Sir, in your present state of health, such very close attention immediately after dinner, would not be adviseable;" was Lord Leonard's observation.

Mr. Villars was something averse to a suggestion, unless, indeed, it originated with himself, and then pretty tenacious of it : he testily answered, " It is said, you know, that a man must be a fool, or his own physician, at forty ; now as I do not subscribe to the first, I beg leave to take my own opinion as to the other."

" I think," said Henry, wishing to draw his friend's attention from this pettishness, as well as to place him in a favourable light to Sophia—" I think it's a pity the test of chess or dice, to which a suitor used to be put in days of yore

as a trial of temper before he could obtain a lady in marriage, should have become obsolete : what an undeniable claim your lordship's would be, who take repeated defeats so philosophically!"

But this was thrown away upon Sophia, whose thoughts had wandered from the chess-board, far as the banks of the lake at Rock Castle could draw them ; and very little satisfaction did Lord Leonard derive during the remainder of the evening from his attempts to engage her in conversation.

A considerable accession of visitors at Belmont Park on the following day caused him to feel himself at liberty to resort again to the Priory ; at least, he might make the enquiry after Mr. Villars's health towards the dinner hour there, and, if not desired to stay, he should still be in time, he thought, for the more fashionable party.

He was instantly laid hold of, however, by Mr. Villars : " We want you doubly to-day, " he said, " on account of Henry's

having engaged himself to dine with our neighbours, and then we'll have our set-to at chess in comfort."

As coffee-time approached, Lord Leonard was revolving how best to ward off the proposed adjournment to the study, when a sudden increase of pain in the invalid settled the matter at once, and he was obliged to be removed into his own room, lamenting as he went that "he had no chance of a head for chess that evening; if he became easier, he would be wheeled back to the piano-forte, and Sophia should charm away the sense of pain with her voice."

She had not unfrequently done so during her stay with him; and so asked, could not well decline it now, though the presence of a stranger made her feel reluctant. This was an attraction to which her admirer had not yet been exposed; he had uninterruptedly enjoyed the charms of her conversation for the last few hours; and when, in addition to these,

her father came to call for the song, such combined powers of sound and sense wholly subdued him.

Day after day now passed, and still Lord Leonard dined at the Priory, either to supply the place of Henry when he was at the Park, or to enjoy the company of Henry when he was at home; and at the expiration of the fortnight he had not the slightest suspicion of never having devoted a single day, after the first, to his hosts.

It had been cursorily remarked by Lord and Lady Belmont, but lost sight of in the succession and daily variety of their guests. It had been felt by Laura, but having for some time seen little hope of captivating Lord Leonard, she satisfied herself with the prospect of turning her displeasure to better account than by betraying it.

Lord Leonard continued to conduct himself with such delicate regard to propriety as to give no apparent cause for

greater reserve of manners on the part of Sophia, than she would have shown to any other visitor of her father's. Still she could not but be aware, that neither chess nor politics were his object, for whenever he could with any degree of civility do it, he evaded both ; neither could the visits be attributed to Henry, for he was as often there without as with him. In consequence of these observations, she drew back from conversation more than she had done, and latterly made Agatha the excuse for absenting herself for a couple of hours in the evening.

Her reserve increased, when she found that upon a sudden call of the Belmonts to town, Lord Leonard was about to prolong his stay by accepting of an invitation from a fox-hunting neighbour of theirs : the change in her behaviour was now so marked as to alarm him.

" Have I been so unfortunate, as in

any way to have offended you, Mrs. Delmere?" he asked in evident emotion as they chanced to be left for a few minutes alone.

" Not in the least, my lord!"

" There is a change in your manner that cuts me to the soul!"

" I confess it has a motive, though not such as you assign."

" And will you not explain it?"

" I think, my lord, you will not misinterpret my frankness; I will, therefore, honestly tell you, that I shrink from the fear of a misconstruction being put on the frequency of your visits. I found myself exposed to very malicious observation in this neighbourhood from the unavoidable intercourse I was obliged to hold with Sir Edward Arundel on Agatha's account; and the consequence has been my feeling it necessary to shut my door against him. The absence of my mother and sister might now again expose me to similar animadversions."

" And do you mean," he interrupted, " to exclude man for ever from your society, lest the tongue of malice should accuse you of intending, at some time or other, to restore to the world charms so calculated to adorn it?"

" I have done with the world, Lord Leonard; the remainder of my days will be devoted to the remembrance of happiness lost — Oh ! how irreparably lost!"

Seeing her extremely affected as she uttered these words, he judged it was not a moment for any thing but implicit submission to her will : " Be assured your slightest hint will ever be to me a law," he said ; " for worlds would I not occasion you an uneasy thought ! I will accompany the Belmonts to town."

She attempted to give him a smile of thanks, but it was so fraught with woe, it pained him to the heart, and greatly damped the exultation with which he had heard her say, her door was shut against Sir Edward Arundel.

He set off as he had promised, and Henry forthwith returned to his post at Torquay, till the beginning of term again should recall him to his chambers in the Temple.

## CHAP. III.

THE mention of Sir Edward Arundel in the conclusion of the last chapter will, perhaps, excite some curiosity to ascertain the use he may all this while have been making of the liberty he so triumphantly boasted of having recovered.

Ah! reader, you possibly know full well, that 'tis not thus the daring imp, who has so slyly and so successfully circumvented his purposes, will suffer him to shake off his trammels. Whatever exultation he had felt in being “himself again,” it was a boast which for the last few years had afforded him but slender comfort, though for the first twenty-four hours, his self-gratulations upon his recent escape continued in full force, and he

dwelt with no slight sensation of pride on his conquest over the weakness that had again gone so near to subdue him.

During the whole of this time, (*i.e.* twenty-four hours,) he had sedulously applied himself to banish Mrs. Delmere from his thoughts, by fixing them, not only on the arts and treachery of Miss Vyner, but on every other instance of female duplicity he had ever heard or read of; but along with the remembrance of Sophia, he had also banished, and perchance somewhat more effectually, the recollection of an auxiliary to heroism, so avowedly potent, as to have been celebrated, both in verse and prose, by abler pens than mine; and this was \**food*;

\* Was ever Tartar fierce and cruel  
Upon the strength of water-gruel?  
But who shall stand his rage and force,  
If first he rides, then eats his horse. PRIOR.

There is also a story upon record (though the author cannot now recollect where), that a physician having asserted the effects of different kinds of food upon animal courage, a caliph appointed the

for he had taken none: and during those hours of the twenty-four which are commonly devoted to another “soother of the troubled breast,” he had also most contemptuously bade him defiance, and not even sought his pillow.

The consequences, however, of all this magnanimous inattention to the cravings of nature, were not so satisfactory. A languor and a dereliction of mental discipline stole over his enfeebled frame, and the image of Sophia forthwith resumed its post; and when his thoughts retraced that candid, open countenance, that dignified simplicity of manners, so peculiarly her own, he knew not how to combine them with the most remote idea of art or duplicity. Still, however, the evidence had been so unequivocal; the

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experiment to be made on a remarkably fierce Arabian robber, who had been made prisoner, and who, by dint of lowering diet, was reduced to such a state of nervous debility, as at length to tremble at the very opening of a door.

conversation between Miss Belmont and Lady Sabina, which chance had so fortunately brought to his ear, so unintentionally too! (for he had observed Laura check an attempt of Lady Sabina's to continue it,); and after that, the positive assertion of Mrs. Villars in contradiction to it next morning; and Agatha; and the dog; and Mrs. Katharine; all, all concurred in establishing the thing beyond a possibility of doubt. He could not conceive his own weakness in resisting the conviction.

His former nervous sufferings now returned with increased strength, and a restlessness, so insupportable, took possession of him, that he finally determined to force himself into action by volunteering his services to the Peninsula.

Perfectly listless and dilatory in his preparations, and delaying his application from day to day, he chanced one morning to meet Charles Belmont, as, "with solemn step and slow," he was dragging

his weary existence along Grosvenor Square.

Charles, struck with the extraordinary change in his appearance, and still somewhat alive to any thing that brought the Priory to his recollection, stopped Sir Edward; and, after some common-place civilities, they walked on together. As they were about to separate, Charles said, “ I wish you would join our dinner party to-day. You want to dissipate a little ; nothing is so effectual against low spirits ; and it’s a set of oddities that are got together for a decision upon this famous wager.”

“ Famous wager !” Sir Edward repeated, scarce knowing what he said, and little caring.

“ Yes ; of course you heard of it ; between Sir Tristram Traverse and Morgan, you know, about getting introduced to Mrs. Delmere.”

Now, indeed, Sir Edward was alive to the subject. He asked an explanation,

which was so fully given, and produced a revolution so overpowering in his feelings, that he was under the necessity of having recourse to the area rails for support.

" You are ill!" cried Charles ; " let me step into the Mount coffee-house, and get something to recover you."

They did so ; and Sir Edward so far recovered his powers of utterance as to decline the proposal for dinner, declare himself subject to these nervous spasms, and thank Belmont for his offered attendance home, which he would not admit of upon any account. Eager to be alone, his full heart ready to burst, he rather ran than walked, till he again reached his own dwelling, and could throw himself upon his sofa, to unravel the confusion of his brain, which was now more bewildered with delight, than it had before been with despondency,

Now, indeed, did the bright image of Sophia again rise before him, in all the

splendour of its pristine dignity, its consistency, its matchless excellence. Adoration was too poor a word to express the reparation due for the degrading misconceptions he had allowed himself to harbour. Her unrivalled merits were the more striking, for the cloud that had veiled them from his sight; all was now clear as day; and the very mode of her extrication from Sir Tristram's last impudent attempt, by throwing herself upon the protection of Lord Leonard Ormsby, was an instance of presence of mind, so much beyond what could have occurred to any other woman, — it was so calculated to make an impression upon Lord Leonard; no wonder it should have acted so powerfully upon his feelings! Well might he be in love! what mortal could behold her and escape it! but far, far be it from him to suspect her of having given encouragement to that love: hard, indeed, would it be to tax her with effects she could not

be seen without producing. No! so decidedly were her affections buried in the tomb of her husband, that long and assiduous indeed must be the passionate devotion that could ever aspire again to recall them thence.

Having thus ruminated away his misconceptions, as well as his fears of Lord Leonard, nothing now seemed to remain, but to take the wings of the morning and fly to the Priory, to make *amende honorable* at the pure shrine of the goddess of his idolatry.

But Sir Edward's was true love, and *that* is no inspirer of bold proceedings with its object. His mind was no sooner released from the tortures to which it had lately been a prey, than all the train of doubts and fears and diffidence of his own merit, inseparable from the sentiments that filled his heart, again resumed their empire; together with a very reasonable dread, that any step which might prematurely betray the real state of his feelings

would banish him from Sophia's friendly confidence for ever. He found it so very difficult to frame any plausible excuse for an abrupt return to the Priory, after the unjustifiable manner in which he had left it, that he at length determined upon the self-denying plan, cost him what it might, of adhering to his Christmas engagement at Rock Castle ; and from thence, messages and communications respecting Agatha might give a colour to his subsequent visit, even in the absence of Mrs. Villars, (which absence had also been taken into the consideration of difficulties,) and serve to guard him against Mrs. Delmere's penetration.

To Rock Castle he, therefore, went: it is needless to say, that all thoughts of the Peninsula vanished from his mind.

At his return in January, he was unavoidably detained in London by some law concerns entrusted to him by Mr

Arundel, during which time the Belmont family removed to town.

Now no longer avoiding those circles of fashion so lately his abhorrence, he accepted of an invitation to dinner at a house, where chance placed him next to Laura Belmont at table. It was not till after the servants had left the room, and the conversation had become so general, as to give him the hope of being heard only by the person whom he addressed, that he ventured to begin a distant enquiry, by "hoping that her friend, Miss Villars, had found material benefit from her residence at the sea-side."

"Perfectly recovered," answered Laura: judging, from the tremulous tone of Sir Edward's voice, what would come next, and unwilling to appear in haste with what she meant to communicate, she said no more.

"Mrs. Villars, I also understood to have been unwell."

"She is wonderfully better too, as her son informed me."

"Mr. Henry Villars is then returned to the Priory?" he said in a tone of satisfaction, feeling that Henry's presence would be an advantage to his views.

"Of course," she replied, carelessly; "it could not otherwise have been consistent with Mrs. Delmere's strict attention to decorum, to have Lord Leonard Ormsby so constantly there."

"Lord Leonard Ormsby!" he repeated in a tone of such agitated surprise as he could not immediately command.

"Yes; I thought you had known," she said, "or I should not have betrayed; though I fancy it can hardly now be deemed indiscretion to mention, what there seems to be no farther attempt to conceal. It is, however, generally believed in the neighbourhood, that she will be guided by her own professions of consistency, in not giving him her hand

till the second year of her widowhood is completed."

Laura had again succeeded to her heart's content; Sir Edward Arundel being wholly silenced, and scarce able to command himself, till the ladies leaving the table gave him an opportunity of withdrawing on pretence of business; when he returned once more to his sofa, the veriest wretch, that the most genuine, ardent, and most severely disappointed passion could make him.

It was not simply envy and malice prepense, nor yet the mere spirit of female revenge for disappointed pretensions, but the combination of these various feelings working in a mind unprovided with a single counteracting principle, that prompted Laura to this precious mischief.

In her present elevated views, even the credit of subduing Sir Edward Arundel was no longer of primary importance; and Henry Villars was scarcely worth a

second thought, beyond that of the glory naturally resulting from the number of aspiring candidates, which her new honours and new connections could not fail to produce. For the preparations were now making for the speedy celebration of her brother's wedding with Lady Sabina, and the patent creating her father Earl of Saltland was immediately to follow ; in consequence of which, Lady Laura Belmont expected to burst upon the world at the ensuing drawing-room, with an increase of attraction that could leave no room for doubt of her own brilliant establishment in the course of the winter.

The wedding took place at the appointed period ; and Lord Cranmore, eldest son of the Marquis of Kingsborough, arrived just in time for its celebration. The earldom was gazetted ; and the new Earl and Countess of Saltland, and Lady Laura Belmont, with a suite of at least fifty titled relations, attended the presentation of Lord Belmont and Lady

Sabina upon their marriage. Nothing was wanting that splendour and magnificence could impart to heighten the glories of the day. The drawing-room was crowded to suffocation, — no other topic was discussed in the fashionable circles but the dresses and the beauty of Lady Sabina and Lady Laura, — the newspapers took up “the wondrous tale” next morning, with every appropriate epithet that could adorn and give it currency, not only throughout this kingdom, but to the remotest corners of Europe.

Triumphant beauties! enjoy your hour! short-lived as every triumph where the eye only is concerned! Could these brilliant gratifications reach Charles Belmont’s heart? Alas! it was no longer the heart which Emily’s youthful fancy had decorated with such imaginary perfections. As her image had faded from his thoughts, with it had faded those qualities which the purity and simplicity of her mind had alone impressed upon

his. Ambition, indeed, stept in, and afforded Lord Belmont a momentary gleam of what he mistook for happiness. Flattery and fashion lent their aid to prolong the illusion ; and, in a very short period, to work an alteration both of manners and feelings, such as will scarcely be credited by those who have not turned an attentive eye to the rapid inroads of example and association upon a vain unsettled mind.

The news of this marriage confirmed the recovery of Emily. The precipitancy of it sunk Belmont to his true level in her esteem. From that moment she never suffered her thoughts to rest upon any recollections of him, but as such obtruded, sedulously sought to counteract them by employments the most likely to engross her attention ; and, by the time of her return to the Priory, she had succeeded so well in her laudable self-control, as to be able to revisit the scenes of their former intimacy, if not wholly

without a pang, at least without any retrospection sufficiently distressing to impede the returning serenity of her mind.

It can scarcely be necessary to dwell on the raptures experienced at the Priory in the re-union of the family, any more than upon the “confusion worse confounded,” which joy occasioned in the brain of aunt Katty, though it must be confessed, that the heartfelt satisfaction which glowed on the cheek of Sophia was not wholly unmixed with wonder at her sister’s inconceivable triumph over her own feelings, which she was more than half-tempted to doubt having been as strong as they had appeared.

## CHAP. IV.

IN the communication Katty had to make of the extraordinary occurrences of the neighbourhood during so many months, she mentioned a pretty little hunting-box, within a couple of miles of the Priory, called Box-Mount, having been lately let, to nobody knew who, which caused abundance of speculation among the neighbours, not without very reasonable fears, that some naughty body might be brought there; for it was a single gentleman on horseback who had been to look at it, and his servant called him my lord, and he had ordered one of the rooms to be fitted up with crib-beds for children, and “as she couldn’t hear,” she added, “that he was par-

ticularly married, she thought it didn't look so well."

There were so many subjects of interest to discuss after so long an absence, that the circumstance attracted but slight notice.

The uncommon mildness of the weather had contributed to remove all remaining symptoms of gout from Mr. Villars, and restore him to his accustomed enjoyments. The bright warm sun had tempted him to be wheeled out upon the lawn, where the first notes of the thrush exhilarated his spirits, whilst admiring the various specimens of early vegetation as brought to him by one or other of those about him. In the intervals, Sophia and her mother were taking it in turn to read to him. Aunt Katty was busily employed the while in gathering ground-ivy for a sick villager, when all at once she uttered a scream of surprise and pleasure, followed by the exclamation of "Merciful goodness! — niece

Delmere, if here is'nt Lord Leonard come back to us!" and then addressing him, who by this time had reached the spot where she was, she added "To be sure, my lord, there could never have been a more agreeable addition than your lordship to our family-party, making it quite complete, as I may say, except for the absence of Henry."

Not a little encouraged by a speech of such happy omen, he made a very kind reply to her salutation, and proceeded to introduce his brother, Lord Cranmore, whose appearance quite answered, Sophia thought, to the impression Lord Leonard had given of him :—a tall, genteel, quiet-looking man, with a very sensible expression of countenance, and a very retired manner; a silent bow followed his introduction to each individual, but he left civil speeches and explanations to his brother.

Lord Leonard said, that "Lord Cranmore's fondness for coursing had induced

him to take a little box in this fine sporting country, which was so near the Priory, that having come down together, he could not resist seizing upon the very first opportunity of introducing him to such interesting neighbours."

" As sure as I'm alive," cried Katty, " its Box-Mount Cottage that your lordship means; and you can't think what a world of conjectures there is in this neighbourhood about it!"

" Then it will be an agreeable exercise of your good-nature, Mrs. Katharine," returned Lord Leonard, " to allay all curiosity by repeating what I have just said; though, for the present, Cranmore has lent the use of it to a friend for the recovery of some sick children."

" Only think how it's all explained now!" exclaimed Katty; " such a parcel of nonsensical stories as have got about!"—

" My good Mrs. Katharine," he interrupted, " I have seen enough of

country villages to know what an inexhaustible fund of gossip a new-comer supplies ; I am, therefore, particularly happy that the information of my brother's taste for coursing, enables you to make it all clear."

" Your lordship may rely upon my making it clear, without loss of time, to every creature I meet with !" said Katty ; and away she scudded.

A tendency to a smile stole over the features of Lord Cranmore, which his politeness instantaneously checked ; neither the inclination nor the suppression escaped the notice of Sophia.

In the course of a pretty long visit, Lord Cranmore had exactly verified his brother's prediction by never opening his lips. On their taking leave, Mr. Villars pressed their staying to dinner, which was declined ; but the invitation accepted of for the next day.

So far all had succeeded to Lord Leonard's wish ; for the reader need scarcely

be told that the taking this hunting-box was a manœuvre of his, though, from his not having been explicit as to the motive, his brother had experienced some surprise to hear of his own predilection for coursing, being a propensity he had not yet detected in himself: however, his quiet observation soon let him into the secret of Lord Leonard's particular admiration of the Hampshire-downs.

The following day passed very agreeably; Sophia not having been allowed to excuse herself, as she wished to have done, from being of the party, as her father was peremptory on the subject.

In the afternoon, Agatha applied to Mrs. Villars for a sight of a drawing of Emily's she had heard mentioned. It represented an interesting occurrence, to which she had been an eye-witness, in Devonshire, and Mrs. Villars related it.

A pleasure-boat was upset in the sight of a young woman, who had walked to the beach expecting her lover to land

from it,—her increasing terror as she failed to recognise him in any of the half-drowned passengers who were brought to shore,—her subsequent fainting upon hearing, one of the by-standers assert, that if he were among them he must be gone to the bottom,—and her being recovered by the assiduous cares of the very young man she had believed lost,—were all affectingly narrated by Mrs. Villars. Emily had seized the moment of returning life in her drawing, when a sort of doubtful rapture overspread the countenance of the girl on perceiving her lover hanging over her, and given it extraordinary effect.

Lord Cranmore had raised his eyes from the drawing to the artist, at the moment of Mrs. Villars's describing the mute agony of the poor girl before she became insensible, and beheld, in the countenance of Emily '*quel vago impallidir,*' that silent but unequivocal witness of genuine sensibility so happily touched upon by

Petrarch,—so untranslatable into the English language, yet so peculiarly adapted to strike upon an English heart! — and it did strike, in its fullest force, upon that of Lord Cranmore! His remarks upon the composition and execution of the drawing proved him to be a connoisseur. Lord Leonard had, in the course of the afternoon, contrived to draw him out by appeals to his opinion respecting Denon and others, that were scattered about the library table; his observations were all just and agreeably given.

When Mr. Villars challenged his old antagonist to chess, Lord Cranmore, fond of children, began entertaining Agatha with a description of Eastern costumes, &c., and upon her asking him to draw some for her, he surprised them all by the rapidity and masterly style of his sketches: the ice was now broken, and his conversation became highly interesting.

" You are just like dear Sir Edward Arundel!" said Agatha; " he used to do such nice things for me, and tell me all about 'em.—Why don't he come here again, aunty?"

" I hope he will, ere long," returned Sophia; " Henry heard of his being gone to Rock Castle at Christmas, and I expect he will bring us some news from thence, Agatha. You are, I believe, acquainted with him," addressing herself to Lord Leonard; " do you happen to know whether he is in town just now?"

" I—I really—am not sure," hesitated Lord Leonard. " Do let us alone; you are calling off Lord Leonard's attention at a very critical moment!" Mr. Villars exclaimed.

" Is that the man, Leonard, whose strait eye-brow, and finely shaped head, would have equally satisfied Lavater and Gall!" Lord Cranmore asked; " whom I pointed out to you at Lord Egham's dinner?" he added, not receiving a ready answer.

"Yes, yes, the same;" rather pettishly.

"Then I am sorry to inform you, madam, that I heard Lord Belmont say he was confined to the house with a nervous fever."

Sophia expressed her concern in terms of friendly solicitude.

"Check-mate!" exclaimed Mr. Villars triumphantly; "I thought I never could have recovered from that attack!"

"I must make over my revenge to Cranmore," said his antagonist; "you are quite above my hand in the absence of your gout."

"Why, for the matter of that, it was pretty much the same when my brother had the gout!" observed Katty. "You remember, niece Delmere, he wanted the chess-board taken into the study, because Lord Leonard did not mind his play."

Mrs. Villars, not displeased with the remark, but wishing to ward off the embarrassment it might occasion, said,

"Aye, lookers-on always spoil sport, you know."

"Nay, but I must do my niece the justice to say, it was not from her speaking about the game."

This being suffered to drop, she said no more; and Lord Leonard, having resigned his place to his brother, took a seat more to his taste between Sophia and Emily at the work-table, where he exerted his utmost talents for conversation, which were of no mean description: Sophia, indeed, took no great share in it; still he soothed his fears with the advantage he hoped to reap from having so successfully established his brother's neighbourly claims; and the very readiness with which she avowed the interest she felt for Sir Edward Arundel was, he trusted, a sign of there being little to apprehend from it.

Upon taking leave, Lord Leonard observed, that although Cranmore could not immediately take posseseion of his sport-

ing-box, on account of the sick children, he himself should feel an anxiety about them that might bring him down now and then to enquire after them. This did not fail to produce from the hospitable Mr. Villars, the proposal of making the Priory his boarding house on these occasions.

In consequence of this, Lord Leonard's visits became so frequent, and his attentions so marked, as to be highly distressing to their object. To the cottage, however, he had never gained access ; and when she knew of his being in the neighbourhood, she avoided dining at the Priory. Still Agatha was so natural a blind for various little attentions as frequently to foil Sophia's purpose ; he never failed to bring with him some appropriate present for the child ; books, prints, educating games that required explanation ; and none of the family were backward on these occasions, in drawing the recluse from her retreat, except Emily,

who understood her sister's motives, and saved her whenever she could do it without attracting observation.

It had been a favourite maxim with Mrs. Delmere, that it must be a woman's own fault if she continued to be addressed by a man she was determined not to accept ; but in the present instance, she found the contrary ; for all her coldness and reserve was placed to the account of her yet unsubdued grief for the loss of her husband ; she was conscious that in most cases it might fairly be expected that time would at length be triumphant : judging, therefore, and rightly, that Lord Leonard was relying on this powerful auxiliary, she spoke to her mother, intreating her to be explicit with him upon the subject ; but Mrs. Villars asserted, it was vain and inexcusable presumption in a woman to refuse, before she was asked, and declared she would have nothing to do with it. Considering her good sense and discrimination, was she

quite sincere in this plea ? She certainly did not, like "Lady Jane Grenville," wish Sophia to have the credit of a refusal, but she did most earnestly wish, that so unexceptionable a man, as Lord Leonard Ormsby seemed to be, might conquer her daughter's reluctance to listen to him, and she trusted much to the effects of perseverance ; and what mother in the same situation could have helped forming a similar wish ?

When this topic came to be discussed between the sisters, it took a very different turn ; Emily entirely coincided in the opinion of its being false delicacy only that could check the generous wish to shorten painful suspense, and she offered to take upon herself the ungracious task.

" No, Emily, I will not so tax your affection ;" said Sophia, " I never have any difficulty in acting for myself, when convinced I am right. You concur with me in the idea, that his attentions are too

obviously pointed, to be mistaken ; you have observed his manner with other women, and are satisfied he is not that most contemptible of beings, a male coquet ! O how gladly should I revenge the cause of my sex, by letting him pine in uncertainty, if he were — but a man of honour is entitled to candid treatment, and I shall not hesitate !”

The only difficulty was to find a proper opportunity, surrounded as she was, at the Priory. It offered, however, ere long.

Lord Leonard came as usual, with a present for the darling. It was a little conjuring ring, and he happened to overtake her, and her aunt, returning from a walk. Sophia bid the child take the ring to Emily, who would help her to discover the puzzle ; and then she instantly began :—

“ I have sent her out of the way with a view to a few minutes conversation,

which I have for some time been anxious to hold with your lordship."

She stopped for a moment to collect her ideas, and he was beginning to avail himself of the opportunity, by uttering some passionate expressions of his devotion.

"I must beg leave to interrupt you," she said, "I am not seeking for compliments; my frankness upon a former occasion, has, I trust, shown you enough of my character to acquit me of vanity, and prepare you for what I am now compelled to say."

Very apprehensive of what she might be leading to, he attempted to break into it by eagerly disclaiming the possibility of his intending mere compliment.

But she again interrupted him; "My lord, I believe you wholly incapable of professing what you do not feel; it is my reliance upon your strict honour, that prompts the unusual step I am taking; your implicit deference to my former fear

of provoking gossiping animadversions has raised you in my esteem, and given me courage to speak upon a point of still greater delicacy."

" Oh ! Mrs. Delmere, in pity do not renew or extend prohibitions that exclude me from every chance !"

" I should be guilty of unpardonable duplicity," she broke in, " if I affected blindness to the partiality with which you honour me ; and the chance for which you plead, would lead to prolonged disquietude. I think the cold reserve of my behaviour can only have been misunderstood, from its being ascribed to feelings over which time and perseverance may naturally be expected to prevail ; it may seem an arrogant boast to hold myself above the common course : still I do not hesitate to say, that I know my own heart, and time can make no change in it. The wish to spare you the continuance of a delusion that might end in

increased pain, urges me to be thus explicit."

Lord Leonard was conscious of the high compliment this generous open proceeding implied, and it heightened his admiration. "Surely," he exclaimed, "you cannot mean to prohibit my visits at the Priory! You will not interdict me your presence whilst the strictest silence confines my feelings to my own breast!"

"One thing more I have to say; be not deluded by a hope of effectual interference from any individual of my family. My principles are fixed and unchangeable. I am honoured by your esteem. I am giving you the most unequivocal proof of mine. This sentiment is decidedly the only one ever to be expected from me. Having spoken so frankly, I must leave it with yourself to judge of the propriety of your continued visits at my father's. I have no right of interdiction there."

They were now so near the drawing-room window as to put a stop to the conversation : but Lord Leonard, wholly disconcerted in this overthrow of all his hopes, declined the wonted hospitality of Mr. Villars, and returned to town unable to form any immediate determination respecting his future proceedings.

## CHAP. V.

LORD LEONARD sought Henry Villars, and expatiated at large upon his misery. His friend encouraged him still to hope much from time, but advised him for the present to submit to Sophia's interdiction, and make some excursion that should relieve his spirits. He satisfied him respecting Sir Edward Arundel, by stating the particulars relative to Agatha, with which Lord Leonard was unacquainted; and prevailed upon him to visit an estate in Ireland belonging to the family, whenever the close of the sessions should set him at liberty.

The mention of Sir Edward Arundel, recalled to Henry's mind the injunction in one of his sister's letters to make enquiry after him, which he had neglected to obey. It had been given in consequence of the information imparted by

Lord Cranmore, of his being confined with a nervous fever. Having now walked with Lord Leonard as far as his apartments in Albany, he proceeded to Upper Brook Street, to atone for his remissness, where his name gained him immediate admittance to Sir Edward; but he was shocked to observe the alteration illness had made in his appearance.

A strong family likeness between Henry and Sophia, increased the agitation which the sight of any of their name would naturally have occasioned. Henry, on perceiving it, feared he had been unintentionally let in; and hastened to apologise for his intrusion by saying, "that a letter from Mrs. Delmere, expressing anxiety on the subject of Sir Edward's health, must plead his excuse, if he came unseasonably."

With still increasing emotion, and even a difficulty of articulation, Sir Edward repeated, "Mrs. Delmere!"

"Indeed, I am ashamed to acknow-

ledge my remissness," Henry resumed ; " the enquiry ought to have been much sooner made."

Sir Edward interrupting him with an effort to subdue his feelings, said ; " The being remembered at all, in Mrs. Delmere's present situation, is more than I could have flattered myself with."

" My sister's spirits, I am happy to say," replied Henry, unconscious of his meaning, " are recovering their natural tone as rapidly as could well be expected."

" It would have been a very extraordinary case indeed, if they had not!" said Sir Edward, with a bitter smile.

" Sophia's is a mind of great energy, — not quite to be appreciated by common rules ;" Henry returned, rather hurt with the sarcasm.

" It certainly *did* appear so to me, Mr. Villars, in the short intercourse with Mrs. Delmere to which I have had the honour of being admitted ; but forgive

me if I say, that the present state of things rather deviates into a more ordinary course."

"Do you mean that she was bound to be eternally inconsolable?"

"Eternally is a word of very circumscribed duration in most female vocabularies. I confess Mrs. Delmere impressed me with an idea of her proving an exception to every customary sarcasm upon the sex."

"I am at a loss to understand in what way my sister forfeits this opinion."

"Possibly I may be taking a very undue liberty in glancing at what is not yet meant to be avowed. Have the goodness to excuse me, Mr. Villars, and give me some account of my little friend Agatha."

"Agatha is much grown, much improved, and much out of patience withal, at dear Sir Edward for staying away so long, as she tells me in one of her curious little epistles, which I believe I have in

my pocket," searching for the letter as he spoke ; " but do explain to me what you suppose is not meant to be avowed."

" If any particular period is intended to elapse before the marriage is made public, be assured of my not —"

" Marriage!" interrupted Henry, in evident surprise, " Mrs. Delmere's marriage! — is it possible such a report should have been circulated? Poor Sophia! cannot all your reserve and retirement save you from such malicious aspersions? How impossible to escape scandal!"

Henry's astonishment was so real as to call up in Sir Edward far more overpowering sensations. The variety of contending feelings scarcely left him breath to exclaim, — " Can it indeed be possible? Could Lady Laura Belmont be misinformed? — or only premature, perchance!" trembling with irrepressible emotion.

"Premature!" interrupted Henry,  
"Good Heaven! — that Lord Leonard  
Ormsby's visits should have been so interpreted by the neighbourhood, I cannot much wonder; but that Lady Laura, knowing my sister as she does, should for one instant have given credit to it, is, indeed, somewhat surprising!"

Sir Edward was so severely reduced by the fever which had preyed upon his very vitals, that the revulsion from despondency to hope seemed to overwhelm his faculties. He turned deadly pale, and faint. Henry, alarmed at his appearance, was about to ring for assistance; but he motioned not to do so, and pointing to the ether, desired he would give him some drops, and not yet leave him.

When a little recovered, he repeated Laura's words; and Henry frankly acknowledged Lord Leonard's admiration of his sister, but asserted it to be wholly discouraged on her part; adding, that he was confident her devotion to the

memory of Delmere was as entire as in the first days of her widowhood.

So alarming a suffocation now took place as to make it expedient to call for assistance; when leaving Sir Edward to the care of his servant, Henry stopped in the parlour till word was brought that he was again relieved. Concluding these faintings to be the result of over-exertion, he regretted having been let in; and, determining his next enquiry should only be at the door, he proceeded straight home to write Sophia a very melancholy account of Sir Edward's condition.

The Easter recess carried a large party to Belmont Park. The two fashionable sisters drew a considerable train after them.

Sophia felt deep solicitude for Emily's first meeting with Lord Belmont, and anxious to afford her the support of her presence, she had taken the earliest opportunity of paying her compliments to

the new Earl and Countess, and Lady Laura; who, being themselves now released from all fears respecting Emily, were courteous and affable beyond their wonted graciousness, and protested they should reckon every party incomplete, in which the family at the Priory was not included. No excuse was admitted of for their joining the gay set that very evening.

They delayed their tea visit till the usual supper hour at the Priory, hoping by that time to find the whole party assembled in the drawing-room at Belmont Park; but the ladies only were yet risen from table. Laura's very warm reception of Emily, had, however, before the gentlemen came in, a little tranquillised the heart-beatings that she could not quite divest herself of, in the anticipation of this trying meeting.

Sophia's eye was steadily fixed upon Lord Belmont when he entered. She perceived his to fall immediately upon

her sister, and a slight emotion betrayed itself in his countenance, but was as quickly subdued ; and he advanced with all the polite ease of a perfectly well-bred man ; enquired after Mr. Villars, and his friend Henry ; and then quietly turning to the coffee that was offered to him, entered into conversation with the person nearest him.

The cool unfeelingness of this behaviour was such a support to Emily's firmness as entirely relieved her from all further trepidation.

Lord Cranmore, whose cottage was now free from the little invalids that had occupied it, had very readily agreed to the proposal made by his sister (at the suggestion of Laura), that he should take possession of it on this occasion. He did not long delay availing himself of his introduction at the Priory ; and Mr. Villars, as usual, gave him an immediate invitation to dinner, which was very readily accepted.

Coffee was just over, and Katty had

coaxed Emily to the piano-forté for one of those Irish melodies her sweet-toned voice carried so irresistibly to the heart. Lord Cranmore in rapturous attention was leaning on the end of the instrument with his eyes rivetted to her face, when the door opened, and Lady Laura and Lord Belmont appeared.

Emily was so placed at the instrument that she could not see them ; and her auditor so entranced, that he neither heard nor saw any thing, till a sudden exclamation from Katty recalled his senses. “ Well ! for my part ! of all the birds in the air ! who could have thought of seeing Your Ladyship at this time o’day !”

It had lately been Laura’s fate to meet with something to disconcert her on visiting the Priory. Lord Cranmore was naturally an object of greater interest to her than his younger brother. She had in vain exerted her best powers to draw him into conversation ; his tacit-

turnity had proved unconquerable ; she had in vain displayed her musical ability ; he simply pleaded a want of ear ; she had, notwithstanding, seen him conversing the preceding evening with playful ease with Sophia and Emily ; and now she had found him evincing the strongest sensibility to tones to which he had professed himself impenetrable ! It was with difficulty she could command herself so as to deliver her mother's invitation for the evening with any degree of civility.

A civil excuse was offered in return.

“ And how long may I ask,” cried Laura, addressing herself to Lord Cranmore with a sarcastic smile, “ How long has Your Lordship been gifted with this new perception of the powers of music ? ”

“ A renewal of the wonders of old ! ” was the quiet reply : — “ Balaam’s ass never spoke, you know, till he beheld an angel ! ”

This answer was not calculated to re-

store placidity to her ruffled brow. She said no more.

Lord Belmont had made up to Emily with increased ease of manner, and even requested to hear a song that had formerly been a favourite with him ; but she coolly rose from her seat, saying, after so long a separation from Lady Laura, she had much to hear from her ; and was moving towards her, when Her Ladyship abruptly declared they should hardly have time to dress before dinner ; and departed with very little ceremony, followed of course by her brother, though with a look that betrayed both reluctance and disappointment.

## CHAP. VI.

IT was a morning or two after this that Sophia dropped in at breakfast time, at the Priory, to settle the plans for the day with her mother and sister; and she was just taking Agatha by the hand to return to the cottage, when the child gave a sudden spring from her, with a scream of delight, “ O dear, dear Sir Edward! there he is, come at last! — and Uncle Henry!” and she darted across the lawn to meet them.

Sophia followed, — a glow of pleasure overspreading her countenance ; and she warmly expressed her satisfaction at the restoration of health his looks bespoke. Those looks did, indeed, brighten at such a reception, and it required all his prede-

termined caution to repress the emotion that would have betrayed him. She reproached Henry with negligence, for not having more minutely answered her enquiries after Sir Edward's health, when he had created so serious an alarm by his representation of it. Much struck with her manner, which evinced an interest beyond what he had supposed, her brother now reproached himself with some neglect, though it was in a great measure accounted for, by the repeated delays that had occurred in this proposed visit to the Priory.

The fact was this : when Henry, after the very alarming state in which he conceived he had left Sir Edward, returned to make his enquires, he found that orders had been given for his admission ; and to his utter astonishment, the traces of disease had disappeared so entirely, that he experienced but slight additional surprise, when Sir Edward made the proposal to him of this visit, having, as he said,

communications to make to Mrs. Delmere from Mr. Arundel respecting his granddaughter. Henry happened to be just then engaged in some business that did not admit of being broken into, and a more distant day was fixed than at all suited the lover's altered feelings ; but he was so perfectly aware of the necessity of guarding against a premature discovery of his passion, that he bridled his impatience, deeming the offer of a place in his chaise to the brother as a sort of friendly covering to his own views. The day had been several times unavoidably put off; and in the constant expectation of its taking place, Henry had been careless of writing as explicitly as Sophia wished.

The thousand little kindnesses shown to Agatha, had placed Sir Edward in a light so different from that in which he had been first viewed — his forbearing and delicate consideration in withholding the knowledge of the child's accident,—

and his very serious subsequent indisposition, had altogether awakened an interest for him, of which Sophia as yet felt no distrust, but which excited the most agreeable hopes in those by whom she was surrounded.

Sir Edward raised to a pitch of rapture by her evident pleasure at the sight of him, felt equal to any gaiety that might be proposed, not even shrinking from the prospect of waltzes and reels, which were talked of for the evening at Belmont Park.

Lord Cranmore's morning call at the Priory had naturally led to his being asked to meet Sir Edward Arundel at dinner; and, notwithstanding his natural shyness, very rapid advances were made in the course of it to more intimate acquaintance. If he had been struck with Sir Edward's turn of countenance, and shape of head, at Lord Egham's, when he was out of reach of hearing his conversation, how much more so now by the sense and

feeling of all he said, the unaffected language in which his sentiments were clothed, and the elegant ease of his whole deportment. Sir Edward, on his part, was not less pleased with the intelligent expression, and mild unobtrusive spirit of observation, that sat on the brow of Lord Cranmore, whose naturally serious cast of countenance acquired an indescribable charm when an occasional smile illumined it ; and he gave way the more readily to the favourable impression he was receiving, from the very unequivocal symptoms His Lordship betrayed of exclusive devotion to Emily. Henry, desirous of promoting the acquaintance between two such superior men, enlivened the discussions that arose by his quiet playfulness, and the original perceptions of his own well-stored mind ; added to this the enthusiastic glow of Mrs. Delmere's turn of thought ; the gentle and judicious discriminations of Emily ; the sterling sense of Mrs. Vil-

lars ; and the energetic clear headedness of her husband, all contributed to give an interest to the subjects treated of, so much above the common run of table-talk, as could not fail of improving the good-will of the company towards each other.

In the evening, Sophia and Emily, attended by Lord Cranmore, Sir Edward, and Henry, adjourned to the Park. Among the arrivals there, was the Duke of Ullswater, an object of no small importance to Laura, being young, rich, and single ; but young as he was, he proved above Her Ladyship's hand. His father had been a Chesterfieldian of the first lustre, and had too carefully trained his son to leave him an easy prey to a matrimonial bait. His wary grace had judiciously divided his adorations between the two rival belles, till he should be able to form some decided opinion respecting Belmont's susceptibility, with regard to his wife. He was not long in discovering,

by tokens almost imperceptible to eyes less experienced, that he might safely devote himself more exclusively to Lady Sabina. Laura, quickly aware of the turn his attentions were taking, sought to awaken his jealousy, by a marked preference to Henry Villars, but in vain did she spread her toils ; neither was the Duke jealous nor Henry caught.

In the course of the evening the piano-forté had been resorted to : Lord Belmont immediately pleaded his fondness for music, as an excuse for withdrawing from the Faro-table, and earnestly solicited Emily for some of those ballads he had been used to dwell upon with rapture. This she coolly declined ; but could not so easily ward off the joining Laura in the duets she proposed.—As they finished the first, Laura exclaimed,

‘ There is in souls a sympathy with sounds !’ with a look of such meaning at her brother, as caught the observation of Emily ; and she instantly resolved to stand

the brunt of any accusation of caprice she might incur, by the refusal to utter another note.

Emily's eyes were now as much opened to Laura's proceedings as Sophia could wish, and she was highly displeased, moreover, with Lord Belmont's manner. The sisters agreed, therefore, to decline all farther invitations from the Park, while the present party remained there.

Of course, Lord Cranmore and Sir Edward became seceders likewise ; and the mutual liking between them soon grew to such a degree of intimacy, that when Sir Edward spoke of returning to London with Henry, according to agreement, Lord Cranmore pressed his acceptance of Lord Leonard's apartment at Boxmount Cottage, with a friendly earnestness that was not to be resisted. And Henry, well pleased with the observations he had lately made respecting Sophia, was very ready to oblige him by deferring his departure.

Lord Belmont had taken much pains to regain a footing of intimacy at the Priory, but Emily, equally offended at his apparent neglect of his newly married wife, and the levity of his manner to herself, had constantly left the room the moment he entered it ; and he had finally gone away from Belmont Park, stung to the quick by this behaviour ; mortified, also, in the extreme, by the comparison which constantly forced itself upon his notice, between his former love and the insipid Sabina, his passion now resumed a power that determined him to leave no means untried of recovering an interest with Emily ; never stopping to ask himself to what it was to lead.

A pressing invitation was shortly after this received, from Mr. and Mrs. Valacort for Emily to accompany her brother on his return to town. Very reluctant, indeed, to leave the opening charms of her flower-garden, she would fain have declined the proposal, but Sophia so eagerly seconded

the wish of Mrs. Villars, for her acceptance, that having no very valid reason to urge against it, she found herself obliged to comply.

Sir Edward Arundel had never before happened to be in the country, in so delightfully forward a spring, he said. He found his health so much improved by it, and his taste for rural scenes so greatly increased, that he could have wished to persuade Lord Cranmore to stay and enjoy its beauties a little longer ; but Lord Cranmore, on the contrary, having heard a very early day fixed for the departure of Emily, was seized with the sudden recollection of some business of moment he had left unfinished in town, and which could not admit of longer delay. Though he insisted with friendly urgency upon Sir Edward keeping possession of the hunting-box as much longer as he should incline to stay, this might have proved a betraying circumstance, and was, therefore, prudently declined.

Mrs. Villars not having been in London since Mr. Villars had relinquished his seat in Parliament, little suspected the whirl of dissipation into which she was driving poor Emily. Mr. Valacort had not been long married at that time ; and the impression her short acquaintance with her sister-in-law had made upon her mind, was that of an elegant, well-bred, pleasing woman, affectionate and obliging, and taking a kind interest in all her husband's connections.

And all this she was ; but the world had drawn her into its dangerous vortex. No sooner had the claims of Mr. and Mrs. Valacort to notice transpired ; his large fortune ; handsome house ; splendid establishment ; excellent cook ; choice wines ; than the most flattering *prevenances* every where assailed her, and proved irresistible : her elegant taste, moreover, gave a peculiar charm to all her *to-do's* ; her parties ; her balls ; her *petit soupers* ; her breakfasts, were in the

highest request, and nothing went forward of any kind to which they were not invited. Mr. Valacort, extremely fond of his wife, and never so happy as when he saw her so, good naturedly gave way to a style of life not as entirely suited to his own inclinations as to hers. He was fond of Henry Villars, and would gladly have had more of his company, but the entire dissimilarity in their modes of life, hours, and society, combined, with his nephew's naturally retired manners, to keep them much asunder.

Henry had indeed apprised his mother and sisters of Mrs. Valacort's increased habits of dissipation ; but still as he had always been told by the very few stylish men with whom he happened to be acquainted, that she was not at all ranked with the most flighty tonish dashers, he did not state her way of life in a light sufficiently strong to deter Emily from encountering it.

## CHAP. VII.

EMILY and Henry Villars arrived in Stanhope-street towards seven in the evening, and were very affectionately received. “ So lucky !” said Mrs. Valacort, “ that my wish to be in time at the new opera made me order dinner early to-day; for I suppose you are both famished after your journey : it will be served presently.”

Emily was rather surprised to hear it called an *early* dinner, though from the hours at Belmont Park she knew there *were* later ; and she wondered what the opera-hour might be, for which Mrs. Valacort was preparing, observing her to be still in her morning pelisse and bonnet.

" You have timed your arrival every way so fortunately ! " continued her aunt ; for there is to be a drawing-room on Thursday, at which I shall present you : they occur so rarely now, that it is a great hardship upon the young people who are to be brought out."

Its being deemed a hardship, was something of a surprise again ; having always heard Laura talk of the necessity of attending the drawing-room as ' a sad bore,' and not aware that it was an indispensable prelude to a young lady's *entrée* into the fashionable world ; however, as she found it was considered fortunate, she was willing to think it so.

When they were rising from table, Mrs. Valacort said, " You are probably too much fagged with your journey to care for the opera to-night, otherwise you need not mind dress as you may keep back in the box."

" My dear aunt, I am in no such haste for dissipation ; but do not let me inter-

fere with your engagement. I shall look forward to the opera as the greatest treat London has in store for me, if you are kind enough to take me when you happen to go again."

Mrs. Valacort, smiling at the word 'happen,' replied, "You happen to be in luck there, too! for my colleague is detained in the country, so you shall have her ticket twice a-week during your stay."

"But, indeed, I am not so unreasonably fond of amusement, as to expect to go into public twice a-week!" cried Emily, "I earnestly hope, my dear madam, you will not let your goodness to me draw you into any thing more than is quite agreeable to yourself."

"Twice a week!" repeated Mrs. Valacort laughing: "you may think yourself well off when you are not twice *a night* in public during your stay with me."

"Poor rustic!" said Henry, smiling at the air of alarm that took possession of Emily's features, "how must your con-

ception expand before they reach the exigencies of the hour in a London life!"

"Don't look so scared, my dear!" resumed Mrs. Valacort: "I shan't suffer you to be diverted out of your senses; but you can't imagine what a world of business regularity will carry one through: however, I feel very much inclined to indulge a fit of idleness to-night and give up the opera: a domestic evening at home with you both will be quite a treat, and afford leisure for talking over the dear Villars's, whom I feel really shocked to have been such a stranger to of late."

"Stranger, indeed!" returned Emily: "not even one of the flying twenty-four hour visits, since poor Sophia's return, nor for some years before! and scarcely a letter in six months!"

"Why, as to letters, Emily, when you see what a London life is, you will cease to wonder; and with regard to visits, we lie north and south, you know,

Lionel will vouch for me, I have always been planning a visit to the Priory, on leaving town ; but it has so happened, either that a party has engaged to go down with us, or to follow us so quickly, that we have been obliged to hasten to the Abbey, to receive them. You have no notion, Emily, how the duties of society lead one off from what one would best like to do."

Emily thought the term duty rather misapplied, but supposed she should learn to understand the fashionable acceptance of words by degrees, and remained silent.

" I think I shall only just look in at the last ballet myself," said Mr. Valacort, " as you say, Caroline, a domestic evening will really be a treat, and to us have all the charm of novelty."

" By the way," said Mrs. Valacort, as they were going up to the drawing-room, " I must send immediately to the dress-maker, about your court-dress!"

and she rang the bell, to give her orders for Madame Clinquant, whilst Emily's eyes wandered in admiration of the taste and elegance with which the apartment was fitted up, and rested with delight on the book-cases and *chiffonieres* so well filled.

"I see treasures here, that may furnish many a domestic evening's enjoyment, if I may be so indulged during my stay," cried Emily, as she eagerly ran over the titles of the books.

"Domestic evenings are not exactly what people usually resort to London in quest of," was the answer: "we shall endeavour to substitute something a little gayer, to the humdrum pastimes of the country."

"The mornings are delightfully long, if you don't dine till eight!" Emily returned: "that will allow some hours comfortable reading; and I am never tired of reading aloud, if you like being read to."

"Lord help you! my dear! the morn-

ing is scarcely long enough for all the necessary avocations that must be attended to; — no, no, you'll soon see how all that is."

" And are all these well-filled shelves only for show, then?" Emily enquired.

" For comfort, child! nothing makes a room look so comfortable as books; it does away all appearance of form; but if you are so desperately bent upon reading, you are welcome to take a volume of any thing you like into your own room, in case you should sometimes be ready a few minutes before my breakfast hour. On one condition, though, that you don't talk of books in company, unless it be the last novel, or a new poem of Lord B——'s: I should hate to have you set down as a blue stocking!"

" Is that the inevitable result of a liking for books?" Emily asked with a smile, " and is the term very opprobrious?"

" They are a mighty affected quizzical set in general: we who reckon ourselves

the ton, hold them in perfect contempt : there are great houses, however, where they are *accueillis*; if you have a curiosity to see the nature of them for once, I can take you to Lady —'s, who makes a great fuss with them ; and I have free access to her *parties choisies* at all times."

"Indeed, I should like it exceedingly," Emily replied ; "for I had no conception that literature made a separation in society :—but you can't mean that fine people hold it a disgrace to read?"

"O dear no ! in the country every body reads ; and there, where topics of conversation are scarce, there is not the same objection to talking of it :—but you will soon see how it is here!" Mrs. Valacort repeated.

Emily was, indeed, concerned to see how it was with her aunt. The gentleman now came up.

"Apropos of affectation!" resumed Mrs. Valacort : "I hope Mrs. Delmere

don't mean to persist much longer in her's, for it is really quite vexatious to observe the sneer and sarcasm with which her 'unexampled grief' is alluded to."

"Can you, who know Sophia, deem it affectation, dear aunt?" Emily asked, much hurt.

"It is probably not affectation in her," said Mr. Valacort: "she was always an enthusiast?"

"And very romantic to boot," rejoined his lady; "but, she should consider, the world does not understand and will not allow for these peculiarities."

"But Sophia means to have no farther concern with the world!" said Emily.

"Pho! nonsense!" cried Mr. Valacort.

"Where it is necessary to veil *cultivation of mind* to ward off the charge of affectation," said Henry, "we may deem it fortunate if *deep feeling* escape the imputation of downright folly."

"Lord bless me!—not at all!" said Mrs. Valacort; "on the contrary, feeling is quite the foible of the day; one hears of nothing but sensibility, only it isn't expected to last for ever."

"No; to do it justice," returned Henry, "permanency is not indeed its prevailing characteristic."

"It would, however, be kind to Sophia," Mr. Valacort resumed, "to endeavour to draw her out of her eccentricities."

Emily answered, for it being very much the wish of all the family to restore her to her friends and to society. The conversation then turned upon interesting family topics, till interrupted by the arrival of that high priestess of taste,—Madame Clinquant.

This weighty concern having been duly attended to, tea was called for; and at half past ten Mr. Valacort's carriage was announced. Turning to Henry, he said, "It may take you home after set-

ting me down, and by the time it returns the ballet will be nearly over ; and then I'll just look in at Lady Eastcourt's to see whether I can get a director's ticket for Emily for the Ancients to-morrow, as you suggested, Caroline."

" And, if you should fail, I may probably get a royal one at the Duchess of Derwent's supper," was the answer : " so if you will call for me in your way from Lady Eastcourt's, I shall be ready.— Bid Chalmers light the candles in my dressing-room, Bonaire, I shall be with her presently."

This winding-up of a *domestic evening* was quite as great a surprise to Emily as any novelty that had arisen in the course of it.

" I shall not be long dressing," said Mrs. Valacort ; " you may amuse yourself the while with writing your name on my visiting-tickets.— I should not set you so tiresome a job ; but that I happen to have just turned away my porter, and

am not yet suited ; and Bonaire makes such a shocking hand of it,” tossing her several parcels of visiting-tickets as she spoke.

“ I shall not need to go very deep into this provision for the month allotted to my visit !” said Emily.

“ Lord, love you my dear ! they’ll not go half through my visiting-list : don’t you know that after your presentation my men must go all over the town with these, to secure your being invited every where with me.”

“ And must I go every where ?—to people I have never seen ?

“ To be sure you must.”

“ But how is it possible to keep up such an extensive acquaintance ?—here are some hundred tickets !”

“ You’ll see !—you’ll see !” repeated Mrs. Valacort, as she went away laughing, much amused with Emily’s simplicity, and delighted with her beauty.

" My aunt or the world must be altered since my mother has held intercourse with either!" thought Emily, " or she could not have been so bent upon my making this excursion; for surely this must be the very extreme of fashionable dissipation! — what a melancholy reflection!"

And the sadness of it pursued Emily some time after laying her head upon her pillow, till fatigue and exhaustion at length produced their natural effect, and locked up that and every other care in happy oblivion.

## CHAP. VIII.

TWELVE o'clock was the breakfast hour ; before which, Mrs. Valacort had surmised the possibility of her niece's having occasionally a few minutes to spare upon a book ; whilst Emily, in the habit of rising nearly with the lark, felt great satisfaction on hearing an hour named which would, in fact, secure her a little day of her own before that of her aunt began : this was the only agreeable novelty she had yet met with in Stanhope Street.

On the following morning, she had written a long letter to the Priory, after having devoted her first hours, as she was ever wont, to a study which she deemed her best security against deviations from those strict rules of right to which she

strongly felt the importance of adhering.—I would not startle my tonish readers by naming the volume; but should it, perchance, be guessed, let it also be remembered that, educated wholly in the country, she was devoid of that noble confidence in unassisted reason, which the more highly accomplished town belles find all-sufficient to preserve them from error. Prone to distrust herself, she was fain to seek for daily support where her unworldly mother had early taught her to look for it. Nay, indeed, truth compels the avowal that, not content with this, she sought for farther assistance from one of her selections out of her aunt's choice collection, a volume of Sermons! Will the name of Allison on its title-page obtain her immunity?—if not, she must abide the censure, for so it really was. Along with it, however, she had also chosen ‘The Lord of the Isles,’ ‘Don Roderick,’ ‘Lara,’ all new to her; and she was deeply immersed in poetic dis-

tress, when, punctually at twelve, she was summoned to the breakfast-table.

" You need not wait for a summons, Emily," said Mrs. Valacort, " you may depend upon finding me here at the striking of the clock; punctuality and regularity are the two great hinges upon which all my avocations turn; and by means of which I get through more than half the world beside."

Emily, much pleased to hear her boast of two such valuable qualities, cherished a hope they would not be wholly bestowed upon trifles.

" Your brother, Henry, is a mighty good sort of young man; and, I dare say, very sensible and very learned, and all that sort of thing; but, as I tell Lionel, he sadly wants polish! no air of fashion about him at all!—Why did not Villars send him abroad during the year of peace?" said Mrs. Valacort, carelessly sipping her tea as she spoke.

Emily was equally surprised and mor-

tified at the kind of contemptuous ‘good sort of young man,’ applied as designating Henry, whom, with the tenderest sisterly partiality, she was accustomed to consider as one of the first of human beings; for “ who could ever think of his manners that knew his mind and his talents ?” was the prevailing observation at the Priory. But checking her feeling for the moment, however, she only answered, “ My father proposed a tour on the Continent to him, at the time you mention, but he did not seem inclined.”

“ You have hurt Emily without intending it, Caroline,” said Mr. Valacort, kindly: “ I see, by her tell-tale countenance, she does not like to hear him called ‘ a good sort of young man :’ its what all females object to ; but, unless we can get him a little amongst us, and rub him up to show something more of what is really in him, he’ll get no better epithet in the fine world, I can tell you though, my dear !”

" It is not any epithet the fine world, to whom he cannot be known, might bestow upon him that would at all hurt me," replied Emily ; " but the opinion of a relation cannot be indifferent ; and I imagined my aunt too well acquainted with his claims, both of head and heart, to have spoken of him slightly as of a common character!"

" Why, to tell you the truth, Emily, it is not easy to get over a deficiency of manners in the world : but I really didn't mean to hurt you, for we love Henry enough to be anxious for his appearing to the best advantage : he will be Lionel's heir, you know, as we have no children, and so we want him to make a splendid alliance."

" I have tried every mode of coaxing him to us," resumed Mr. Valacort, " but he affects to keep such out-of-the-way hours, and pleads study, and *that*, you know, is a great joke, with the immense

property which must one day centre in him."

" I believe," Emily gravely answered, " my brother does not conceive it to be disgraceful to a man of fortune to study!"

" His being so unlike other young men inclines one to fear he may have formed some low attachment!"

" Good Heaven! my uncle!" interrupted Emily; " of all the unmerited suspicions that could attach to Henry—"

" Well, well," interrupted Mrs. Valancourt, " don't take the suggestion so very deeply to heart!—he would have plenty of high precedent to plead if it were so; but, I protest, he gave such earnest of improvement yesterday, in the arch playfulness of some of his observations, that I think the very having Emily with us will draw him out; and I have half-a-dozen young women of fashion in my eye, not one of whom would say him

nay, if we could but get him to make up to them."

Different as Emily's matrimonial wishes for her brother were from those of her uncle and aunt, the really well-meant solicitude they expressed softened the pain their low estimation of his merits had given her. Adverting, however, to Mr. Valacort's ill-grounded suspicion, she said, "So far from the slightest disposition in my brother to any thing derogatory of his place in society, I should —if I were to select a single expression as characteristic of his mind and thoughts —I should say it was 'elegance.'—I am not speaking of his exterior," she added, observing the smile rising to Mrs. Valacort's lip; "though I must confess that, according to my confined ideas, even *that* appears far preferable to some of the very fashionable guests I have seen at Belmont Park."

"O! his person is undeniably good: I have no quarrel with that!" rejoined

her aunt ; “ and I’ll do you the justice to allow you *ought* to be a judge of elegance, for, in truth, it’s no compliment to say it is personified in you !”

Emily, wholly unused to the newly-imported foreign custom of expressing admiration of looks and dress to the face of the person, blushed up to her eyes at this speech. Mrs. Valacort went on :—  
“ Lionel and I must accustom you to hear these kind of truths, my dear, that you may not be in danger of betraying your rustic education by that sad trick of blushing, to which I perceive you are so prone ;—but, apropos, of Belmont Park ; pray how does that young *ménage* go on ?”

“ I believe pretty much as fashionable *ménages* do go on !” she answered, with some embarrassment, but trying to smile.

“ Because we heard of something rather more rapid than usual : the Duke of Ullswater is said to be very assiduous, and these are early days for that !”

"Is there any specific time," said Emily, playfully, wishing to ward off any allusion to Lord Belmont, "at which a fashionable wife may allow of particular attentions from a gay young man?"

"If there be," said Mr. Valacort, looking affectionately at his wife, "Caroline has not yet found it out." And, in truth, they were a most attached couple, notwithstanding the hold fashion had taken upon their general opinions and manners.

"It is not so much the Duke's attentions, as the early falling off of Lord Belmont that causes surprise," Mrs. Valacort resumed: "they say he actually already neglects her, though so desperately in love when they married."

A most opportune note was just then delivered, which prevented the observation that might have been made on the fluctuations of countenance this speech had occasioned. Mr. Valacort's eye was also luckily fixed upon his newspaper.

"Now mind, Caroline," he said, when he had done, "I charge you not to be sparing in setting off this pretty person to the best advantage, of which, however, it may be fairly said, 'when unadorned to be adorned the most,' but that would not do in the royal presence.—Heaven defend us! what another blush was there, Emily! but I don't quarrel with it; modesty and simplicity will stand their ground, however fashion may have perverted the general taste."

And, in fact, Mr. Valacort was in raptures with his niece, and promised himself much delight in watching the impression her unaffected graces would make upon the world, as well as the impression of the world upon her pure and natural mind.

"Just see who's dead and married, and glance my eye over the lie of the day as an opening for conversation," said Mrs. Valacort, as she rapidly skimmed the newspaper, which her husband

had put into her hand ; “ and then to business ! By breakfasting at this early hour, I escape the interruption of breakfast-visitors, and settle all the engagements for the day *a tête reposée* ; otherwise one gets into fifty scrapes ! — Reach me the *Who's-at-home?* my dear,” pointing to a cedar-wood substitute for vulgar card-racks which stood upon the *chiffoniere*, “ let's see what parties I missed going to last night, and whether any thing beyond the usual apology is required.”

“ What may the *usual* apology be ? ” thought Emily, who conceived the apology to imply some explanation of the hindrance ; but, determined not to tease her aunt, or expose her own ignorance by more questions than she could help, she waited in silence for her instructions, and was somewhat surprised at the concise and cavalier style of the printed cards of excuse, of which she was directed to fill up the blanks.

"And is this all the civility required for breaking an engagement?" Emily asked.

"Oh! quite sufficient, except on particular occasions; here are two that require a civil lie, so I shall write the notes myself. I have not been to one of their assemblies this winter, and they will soon be giving balls, so I must keep in favour."

It was like a new language to Emily, at least, very certainly, they were new ideas. "The age for dancing is not as limited here, then, as I've been told it used to be in France, where no woman danced after thirty!" she observed; rather sorry to think her aunt should retain such a juvenile taste.

"But, then, you might have been told also, that *thirty* was apt to be very slow in its approaches; however, my dancing days were over long before that prescribed term; I always disliked it."

"Then, is not a ball a very dull thing for a mere looker-on?"

"O no! I should take it very ill not to be asked. They are always select,—and an elegant supper! Though, upon recollection, as I give balls myself, I shall not be overlooked, so a printed card will do."

"Give balls when one has no young people! and go to them without liking to dance! What will my mother say when she hears of it all?" thought the wondering girl.

Notes without number poured in while this employment was going on; and reading, canvassing, and answering, filled up the time till the carriage was announced.

"Now for dress-makers, milliners, and jewellers to equip you properly for morning and evening exhibitions. I perceive you are behind-hand in modes at the Priory," said Mrs. Valacort.

"I am very sorry to give you so much

'additional trouble,'" Emily replied; "however, that will be but for once; and I quite rejoice that I came in time to help you through this wonderful influx of notes."

"It is pretty much the same every day," she answered carelessly; "but with regularity I get through it all. Regularity is the soul of business! If I indulged in the customary breakfast hour of one or two o'clock, I should always be behind-hand."

They now hastened to milliners and dress-makers innumerable. Some excelled in one thing, some in another. At Rundell and Bridges, an elegant and complete assortment of pearls was selected, with which Mrs. Valacort presented Emily in her uncle's name; adding some valuable trinkets and ornaments in her own. She was really vain of her niece's beauty, and eager to set it off to the best advantage; and all was done with so much kindness and good-will, that, although

distressed by the costliness of the presents, a high gratification arose from the affection that prompted the gift.

"Now we shall just get home by luncheon-time," said Mrs. Valacort; and Emily rejoiced in the unexpected comfort of the morning's business being so soon over; but here she found herself widely mistaken.

No one happening to drop in at the moment, luncheon was soon expedited. On Emily's testifying surprise at the splendid display of it, her aunt said, "There is always a hot thing or two served since mutton-chops have come into royal favour; and as we are occasionally honoured with royal visitors, it is well to be prepared. Now," she continued, "go and equip yourself in some of your new purchases. The barouche will be at the door presently. We must make a few morning calls, — not many, on account of dining early, that we may get

to the ancient music. I'll make out the list while you change your dress."

Emily obeyed ; and satisfied herself that morning calls could only be on intimate friends ; so that would not recur every day, any more than shopping.

Some visitors having been admitted, delayed their setting forth again till near four. " See, my dear, whether the barouche is at the door ?" said her aunt, gathering her matters together.

" I suppose they conclude it too late for visiting," said Emily, looking out, " and expect us only to take an airing, for they have let down the head."

" Too late ! it's exactly *la belle heure* ! and I always have the head down in tolerable weather. No time for airings ! I never can accomplish airing, but on a Sunday !" Mrs. Valacort replied.

" And shan't we be sadly stared at in the streets in an open carriage ?"

" Look along the street, you little rustic !" laughing, " and you will see an

open carriage of some description or other at every door. Never fear my making myself particular, Emily!"

"My dear aunt, I must not venture to open my mouth before strangers, I shall make you so ashamed of my ignorance."

"There will be full as much cause for pride as shame, in having such a pretty creature to produce!" replied Mrs. Valacort, looking at her with complacency and delight.

Emily, though feeling abashed at hearing so much of her looks, had, however, too much sense and true modesty to provoke farther praise by disqualifying speeches, and simply answered, "I am very grateful for your partiality, my aunt."

As her eye fell upon the list of visits, she rather wondered at the number of *intimates*; but determined to betray no more ignorance, she made no observation.

After about a dozen ‘not at home’s,’ Mrs. Valacort said, “If we continue in such high luck as this, we shall get on better than I had hoped!”

“High luck in missing one’s friends!” thought Emily; but she was silent.

“But I just recollect,” resumed her aunt, “that your hoop was to be brought home; and I must give you time for a practice, before you dress for dinner.”

“A practice! — Of what?”

“Of the management of your hoop. I have no objection to bringing out an Evelina; but I mustn’t have you quite a *Ninette à la cour*.”

This might have been Greek for anything Emily understood of it; but she concluded, ‘she should see,’ as she had been told on other occasions; and Mrs. Valacort, unconscious of her ignorance, said no more.

Be it remembered, Emily was not born in the days of hoops; and of a court-

dress she had no conception, not having been in London since her childhood.

They continued in high luck ; wiped off a long score of names from the list ; and found the hoopmaker awaiting their return.

Nothing could equal the amazement of Emily, when she found, that to be fit to appear at Court, it was necessary to get into a machine that would make her nearly as broad as she was high. “ Is there no possible exemption from this ? ” she exclaimed in dismay ; “ I shall stick in every door-way ! ”

“ That is just what you are to practise to avoid,” said Mrs. Valacort.

This practice, indeed, seemed to Emily the most ludicrous operation that ever was thought of ; but the hoopmaker assured her it was what all the young ladies were obliged to submit to before their presentation, “ ever since the preposterous Grecian lankness had come into fashion ; but she remembered the time

when no lady could appear any where without a hoop twice or three times the circumference of this, — and a most becoming majestic air it had !” said the old woman, “ just like a man-of-war in full sail, as I have heard the gentlemen say when I have been trying them on their ladies.”

This harangue was almost as entertaining to Mrs. Valacort as to her niece, having strongly in her mind two recent instances of the majesty so described — neither of whom, however, caused her to join in the reprobation of Grecian lankness. “ But what would have become of you, Emily ? ” she said, “ in the former birth-day balls, when country-dances were danced in such a whalebone incumbrance.”

“ I should have become, what I am very much afraid will be my fate now, very ridiculous ! Do, my dear aunt, let me off from this terrible drawing-room business ; and suffer me to take my chance of such of your acquaintance as will ad-

mit me without it. You can't imagine how I shall enjoy being left at home sometimes."

" Impossible ! notice has been given to the lady in waiting."

Mr. Valacort brought home two or three members to dinner — The House having broken up unexpectedly ; Lord Leonard Ormsby was one of them. The pleasure expressed on both sides at meeting, led Mrs. Valacort to set him down as her niece's admirer ; and she was by no means dissatisfied with the discovery.

The conversation at dinner turned upon some important question that had been lately debated ; and Lord Leonard said, " I was quite vexed at the poor figure Belmont made."

" We thought better of him when he was one of us," replied his neighbour smiling ; " but let me tell you, it's a cursed awkward thing when a man is bound to support a measure against his own opinion of it."

"Aye!" said another, "he fairly told us at the club it was all a d——d job; but he was expected to speak, and couldn't help himself."

Emily, ever in some degree disconcerted by the name of Belmont, experienced a sense of grief and mortification at every new instance of his dereliction from those virtues with which her fond imagination had for so many years adorned him. The feeling manifested itself in her expressive countenance, so as to attract the observation, and excite the curiosity of Lord Leonard; but he knew not how to interpret it.

Mrs. Valacort rose from table on the removal of the dessert, saying, "I can't stop to give you coffee, lest we should be too late for the ancient music."

"You will have lost the best half of that as it is!" was observed.

"The second act is always quite enough for me!" she replied.

Emily, to whom the idea of the

highly-finished style in which she had been told this music was performed was delightful in the extreme, could have wished her aunt less easily satisfied.

"If music is really such an object to you, I'll get you an order of admission to the Monday-morning rehearsals, provided you don't expect me to go with you," said Mrs. Valacort to her.

"No, pray don't!" cried Emily, "mornings are far too precious to be sacrificed to mere amusement, however strong the temptation."

"Aye, true; duties ought to go first," said Mrs. Valacort, "and it is difficult enough to find time for them in London." Emily began to be aware that words in London did not exactly bear the signification they did in the country.

"Now I shall set you down at home," said Mrs. Valacort, as they got into the carriage after the concert; and you may order up the sandwich-tray, for I shall shirk Lady Marsden's supper; only just

show myself at a couple of houses where I have been deficient all the winter, and be with you presently ; for I shall have to rout out early to-morrow morning, on account of our *friseur*, he's in such request on court-days ; he must be caught as he may. Don't wait for me, however, in case I meet with unexpected delays, you poor sleepy thing ! you look quite tired now ; I had forgot your being used to go to bed with the chickens."

The more kindness her aunt showed and expressed for her, the greater was Emily's regret at the hourly encreasing conviction of her being the most dissipated woman in the world.

On the following morning, by eleven o'clock, Monsieur Pompon and his attendant made their appearance. Jenny ran up laughing : " I declare, Ma'am, if I didn't think here was company coming, and it's Mounseer, the hair-dresser, in a gig ; and Mrs. Valacort sends word, as you are to take him first, if you please."

Pompon being admitted, set his aid-de-camp to work, to put in Papillottes ; opened his *Cartons*, and began displaying feathers and flowers in such profusion as quite alarmed Emily's quiet taste. " As simple as may be, not to appear particular, if you please, Monsieur — This pearl bandeau, of course, and a feather or two, if necessary, — but no flowers," she said.

He admitted the elegance of pearls and feathers, without flowers ; and began placing the feathers. When he had got the length of three, she wanted to stop his hand ; but he assured her it would be *absolument mesquin* ; so she reluctantly suffered him to proceed to five ; but, as he still went on selecting more, she became quite refractory. He appealed to Madame. Jenny was deputed with the appeal. She brought back word that Pompon dressed the Ladies Dangerville, who were the models of taste. Pompon declared they never had fewer than nine ;

and frequently fourteen. Upon this Emily started from under his hands; and flew to Mrs. Valacort. "My dear aunt, he really is going to make a Peruvian Cacique of me! Are not five feathers quite enough for every possible purpose but flying?"

"If it distresses you so very much, your head may certainly pass. They are well put on, and become you."

Away ran Emily. "Put up your box, Monsieur; not another shall find place upon my poor loaded head. I shall have trouble enough to bring these safe back."

Pompon shrugged his shoulders; begged it might be understood that he was not *responsable*. Mademoiselle was *si belle* that she might certainly dispense with what she thought proper, and be *a ravir*; but he could not help observing, that *la decence sembloit exiger*, that *une presentation*, should have its full complement of feathers.

Emily engaged to acquit *him* of the incongruity to whomever it might concern.

Next came Madame Clinquant, who had been sufficiently struck with Emily, to expect great credit from dressing her. She had paid particular attention to the dress, and now came to see it put on herself. Pompon being gone, she and Emily were sent for into Mrs. Valacort's dressing-room. The circumstance of dressing before strangers was not wholly devoid of distress to the poor novice, till her aunt on perceiving it told her laughingly, "She was in high luck to escape so; had I not borne in mind your rusticity, half-a-dozen of my intimates would have had leave to attend this operation," she said.

Emily certainly felt comparative relief in that idea; with very earnest entreaty, she also had the comfort of obtaining a little more of covering than had been intended, and when all was said and

done, the superintendent of the *toilette* declared herself perfectly satisfied *que Mademoiselle effaçeroit toutes les beautés de la cour*; while poor Emily, who had never before beheld Court or court-dress, thought there never was such another preposterous figure as they had made of her.

As they were about to encounter the crowd on the stair case at B—house Mrs. Valacort said, “Now keep close to me, Emily! and, for heaven’s sake, don’t be civil!”

Emily was far from taking in the full import of these words, which, fairly translated, implied, “Be as rude as in a bear-garden;” she conceived they simply meant, not civilly keeping back to let others pass. Though she had been somewhat dismayed by the crossed halberds of the beef-eaters at the door, she stuck close to her aunt, and got up stairs without much difficulty; but when they came to the formidable door-way of the first apartment, it was a very different affair indeed!

Mrs. Valacort was an excellent manœuvrer in a crowd, and made her way with great dexterity and little scruple ; but for the warfare of hoops and elbows to which she was now exposed, poor Emily was not at all prepared, and her motions were becoming retrograde, when one more than commonly determined elbow came into such forcible contact with her side, that the pain turned her faint, and she shrunk entirely from the contest, by which means she was soon shoved back to the head of the stairs. Lord Cranmore was just ascending them ; with an exclamation of astonishment, mixed with alarm at her pale and distressed appearance, he caught hold of her, as she seemed scarce able to support herself ; and with extreme difficulty, and very little respect for lappets and trimmings, he got her down the stair, and depositing her in a window of one of the passages, he threw it up to give her air, and then went to obtain a glass of water by means of one of the beef-eaters.

By the time he returned, she found herself so far recovered, that she proposed making another attempt with his assistance ; but he assured her it would be fruitless — there could be no chance of her joining her aunt, before she must have been spoken to, and passed on — but if she would allow him to attend her back into the lower apartments, he would then endeavour to find Mrs. Valacort, and inform her of what had happened. To this she agreed, and, having seated her in safety, he left her.

Meanwhile Mrs. Valacort missing her, and guessing in part what had occurred, had, however, no option, being now forced forward, whether she would or no, to where the Q— stood. The presentations were so numerous, that not one in ten was spoken to, but of Mrs. Valacort, a gracious enquiry was made after her pretty niece, which afforded her the means of explaining what she conjectured to have happened. This

was followed by a remark upon the distinct character of Miss Villars's beauty from that of her sister, Mrs. Delmere, which astonished Mrs. Valacort, not at the moment recollecting, by how much, "in a great matter or a small," her M—— was known to be the best informed woman of the United Kingdoms, and aware that Emily had scarcely yet been seen: delighted, however, to find Mrs. Delmere's seclusion had not obliterated the impression of her charms, (for who can help being flattered by the proof of living in R—l memory?) she not only replied by an elegantly-turned compliment, which, from the fear of mutilating it, shall not be here repeated—but she made it her very earnest request on her return home, that her husband should absent himself from the House next day upon a question, where he must necessarily vote against ministry: not, however, having exposed himself to the same fascination, he resisted her wish.

Well is it that Princes are not more aware to what dangers affability and smiles would expose the consciences of their subjects.

Whilst Lord Cranmore was gone in quest of Mrs. Valacort, Lord Leonard Ormsby and Lord Belmont had, almost at the same moment, discovered Emily, and stationed themselves as her protectors, till her ambassador should bring word what her aunt might wish her to do.

Belmont's expression of joyful surprise on beholding her bordered so much on the familiar levity which she considered an insult, as highly to displease her. She answered him with cold and distant civility, and endeavoured to confine her conversation solely to Lord Leonard.

Mrs. Valacort soon came to her, Lord Cranmore having luckily met with her coming down the stair, and explained poor Emily's misadventure. " And we have nothing left for it now, but to find

our way to the carriage as fast as we can," said Mrs. Valacort : " any further attempt is out of the question."

Lord Belmont put himself forward to offer his arm to Emily, but with calm dignity she passed it by, and took Lord Leonard Ormsby's. Conscious of the repulse, but satisfied that Emily was not Lord Leonard's object, he prudently gave way, without seeming to perceive it ; and said to Mrs. Valacort, " Lady Sabina is not yet informed of Miss Villars's being in town ; but will, I am certain, wish, with your leave, to take an early opportunity of paying her respects in Stanhope-street. Meanwhile, I can answer for the pleasure with which she will, at any time, supply your place as chaperon to Laura's friend ; the sisters go every where together. I must now retrace my steps, or I shall be too late to pay my court ;" and, with a submissive bow to Emily, he passed on.

"Not being in office," said Lord Leonard, "I need not mind, though I were to lose the opportunity of paying my court; so I shall not relinquish my charge, till I see you safely out of this bustle."

"And I could wish," said Mrs. Valacort, "it were your farther pleasure to come and ascertain Emily's being alive at dinner-time after this morning's adventure, and prevail with Lord Cranmore to join you."

The brothers, with evident pleasure, accepted the invitation.

"Didn't I warn you against civility? you little, incorrigible rustic!" said Mrs. Valacort, as they drove home.

"I do assure you, my dear aunt, it was self-preservation that obliged me to give way. My sides are quite bruised with the elbows they encountered. I hope I shall never have to fight my way through a quality mob again; my home-

bred habits are not up to such encounters.”

“ You must never attempt then to stay a ball-supper,” said Mrs. Valacort.

“ I’m sure I would give up all the pleasure of the dance afterwards, which is always the best of the night, rather than pay such a price for it. Had I not been so fortunately recognised by Lord Cranmore, I am persuaded I should have fainted in the midst of them.”

“ Those two brothers seem to take a very obliging interest in you,” was the playful reply. “ I perceive there may be a very agreeable little spice of coquetry mixed up with rural simplicity. I did not suspect its existence in your demure ways, Emily.

“ Rest assured you will never find it: I should hate myself, were I capable of what I so strongly reprobate,” she answered very gravely, the late mortifying discovery of Laura’s turn that way recurring fully to her mind.

“ Nay, child, you need not look so desperately grave about the matter : I am accusing you of nothing very heinous ; but I shall hope to be let into your secrets in time, Emily, and then you may rely upon my never making sport of what may distress you.”

“ I have no secrets but what you may command, whenever affection shall prompt your enquiry into them.”

“ Well ! I shall let you rest now, that you may recover yourself by dinner-time, for we have some more men coming besides your lords, and you look quite pale and fagged.”

“ The getting off all my paraphernalia will recover me as much as any thing, for I seriously ache under the weight of it.”

“ Poor child !” laughing: “ Yes, you may be disengaged of the hoop, and, indeed, by the state of your drapery, from it all; for I perceive the fatal effects of the conflict on the tassels and festoons.”

" And the feathers may go too, I hope."

" No ; the feathers cannot be dispensed with. All the court heads will be exhibited at Mrs. Waller's assembly to-night ; and as we failed in the actual presentation, it is the more necessary to show it was intended."

" And these dangling lappets : consider I have not been taught like Lady Sabina ; I shall have them in my soup."

" Chalmers shall pin them up, so as to make a very pretty addition to the head-dress ; they must remain."

Poor Emily, obliged to acquiesce, was, however, agreeably surprised, upon catching her own figure in the pier-glass as she passed it, to observe how much less ludicrous it appeared to her than when she had set out : indeed, she now felt a very comfortable consciousness, that it was by far the least extravagant attire her eyes had rested on the whole morn-

ing, for even her aunt's plume greatly exceeded her own.

Emily felt no slight enjoyment in the hours of quiet, which solicitude for her looks had obtained her, when she heard how incessantly the knocker kept going, nor could she imagine whence the visitors could all come, as she believed the crowd at court to have comprised the whole fashionable world, till set right by the information, "that there had not been a creature there, except those in office, and who had presentations to make."

She was much gratified, upon entering the drawing-room, to find her brother among the dinner guests.

Mrs. Valacort, observing the remains of fatigue on Emily's countenance, kindly said, "I think, my dear, we will cut every thing to-night, except Mrs. Waller's assembly, and there we need not go till towards twelve, so you will have plenty of time to recover."

"I didn't know there was any other engagement on hand for to-night," replied Emily, not too happy in the prospect of setting out in quest of amusement at midnight.

"Half-a-dozen, I dare swear," said Mrs. Valacort: "the catches and glees for one, though that I generally cut; I only put my name down to please the old Duchess of Squeakem, who patronises the leader."

"Ladies are never bound to know their engagements before-hand, I believe," said Lord Cranmore: "I see my mother and sister look over the at-home's for the evening, when the carriage comes to the door."

"Yes; and select those that promise best in point of company: that's the way," said Mrs. Valacort.

"But then don't you give offence where you don't go?" Emily asked.

"Oh, no! all that is understood, and one tells some civil lie, if it should happen to cut out the same person too often,

and that she is of sufficient consequence to be worth keeping well with."

Emily made no reply, but Lord Cranmore read her thoughts in her countenance, and was delighted to mark her evident dissent from forms established by selfishness and impertinence. Mrs. Valacort was not, however, remarkable either for the one or the other ; but she fell into the prevailing ease of the day from habit, without ever troubling herself to reflect upon its tendency. As they were taking their coffee, she said to her niece, " Now look into the who's-at-home, and let us ascertain what we are giving up to-night."

" You don't seem to follow the usual mode of selection," Emily said ; " for here are marchionesses and countesses given up, and we are going to a simple Mrs."

Lord Leonard smiled, and with something of an arch glance at Mrs. Valacort, said, " You will soon become aware,

Miss Villars, of the triumph of ton over title in the *beau-monde*."

"I put my aunt's patience to the test every hour of the day by my ignorance," said Emily.

"We shall all be inclined, I believe, to deem your ignorance your ornament," said Lord Cranmore.

"Come! now let's have a quiet rubber!" cried Mrs. Valacort, ordering the card-table; and Lord Leonard and two more sat down with her to whist.

"French fives? short?" — the gentlemen assented.

"Now, what does that mean?" Emily asked Lord Cranmore.

"That's more than I can tell," he replied: "what does it mean, Leonard?"

"That a couple of deals may transfer forty pounds of Mrs. Valacort's property into my pocket," said Lord Leonard.

Emily shuddered, and turned pale.  
"My aunt is then also a gambler!" was her distressing reflection.

“Are you musical, Emily?” asked Mr. Valacort.

“I don’t suppose I could have any claim to be reckoned so here, but my father sometimes says I draw his thoughts from his gouty limbs by my performance.”

“If you drew them from his Newspaper it might be a greater boast,” said Mr. Valacort. “Is your father as great a politician as ever, Henry?”

“He could not be more zealous if the weal of the nation turned upon his vote.”

“I wish he would bite you — I want you in Parliament, Henry.”

“When I perceive the good that honest intentions can produce there, I shall be very willing — but Emily, have you not tried that fine instrument in the next room yet?”

“I meant it yesterday morning, and came down an hour before breakfast-time for the purpose, but found the shutters just unbarring, and the housemaids in possession of the room — and since that there has not been a leisure moment.”

" You will find your time very fully occupied during your stay," Lord Cranmore observed.

" *Filled up* you mean!" she returned, with a smile.

" I stand corrected: occupation bears a different meaning in your vocabulary, I know; but will you not take advantage of this moment's respite to try the instrument?"

" Shall I not disturb the whist table?"

" We shan't hear you Emily," said her aunt.

" Speak for yourself, Mrs. Valacort," said Lord Leonard.

" Do your utmost then, Emily! for he's my antagonist," laughing.

" Shut the folding doors, Henry! 'tis not fair to disturb their game;" said Mr. Valacort.

The doors were shut; and Emily charmed her uncle by her tones and her expression. He was passionately fond of music, and no bad performer on the vio-

loncello — “ I had no conception of so delightful a performance as this ! ” he exclaimed. “ I shall give you little rest when I catch you at home, I promise you ! ”

“ My aunt does not intend that should be too often, as far as I can judge,” replied Emily.

“ A little rest might, however, be desirable just at present, if Emily’s pale looks speak truth,” said Henry.

“ You did well to call my attention to them,” observed his uncle ; “ I should have had no mercy, and Caroline would not have forgiven me, she’s so anxious Emily should look her best, on her first appearance ; so let’s adjourn.”

“ Lord bless me! — how you have been fagging her ! ” cried Mrs. Valacort, when they returned into the room ; “ Do fetch your work, for country ladies always work, and sit down quietly here by me, and neither speak nor move till it is time to go, — and order tea, Lionel ! that will help to revive her.”

Emily went for her work, and brought it to the corner of the table where the candle stood ; but, unused to attend to where her feathers might reach, in stooping to her work, she set them on fire. Lord Cranmore was, at that moment, approaching to bid her good night ; when, perceiving the blaze, he rushed forward, exclaiming, “ My God ! her beautiful hair ! ” — and clapped his opera-hat upon her head. The conflagration had been so instantaneous that Emily herself was unconscious of it ; and her sudden start and shriek, together with Lord Leonard’s burst of “ What the devil, Cranmore ! are you mad ? ” turned all eyes at once to her appearance with the opera-hat upon her head. The astonishment excited produced a mixture of agitated surprise and laughter ; and great approbation of the judicious manœuvre, when the removal of the hat displayed the consumed feathers and unsinged hair ; which in Emily, however, altogether bordered so nearly upon hys-

terics that Mrs. Valacort immediately rung for her maid, and advising her to retire, prudently determined against taking her into company that night: observing, after she was gone, “ I could not bear to have her seen to such disadvantage, after all the expectations that have been raised about her beauty ; so, if you will be the bearer of my excuses, Lionel, and tell what has happened, we may go on with our whist ; provided my beaux prove staunch, that is to say ; or if not, you might pick me up a recruit or two where you are going.”

The gentlemen professed themselves at her disposal “ till two ;” Lord Leonard added, “ and then I must look in at the Duchess of Darwent’s supper.”

“ Very true ! ” said Mrs. Valacort, “ she mentioned it to me at the drawing-room ; and the various worries about Emily, put it quite out of my head ; come back for me then, Lionel, and I may look in there also.”

And so the matter was arranged.

## CHAP. IX.

THE following day Henry attended Mrs. Valacort's breakfast table.

"The morning is so very fine," he said, "that I think a walk in the Park will do Emily good, and prepare her for the business of the day."

"I protest that's a bright thought, Henry!" Mrs. Valacort replied; "for see what a rag she looks with the adventures of yesterday! they may talk of the health of the country, but I'll pit a thorough-paced town Miss, against any half-dozen country girls for standing fatigue! You may lounge about Kensington-gardens, and I'll excuse your shopping with me to-day, provided you are back in time for luncheon, and the morning visits that must be made.

"Shopping again!" cried Emily, "I thought we had done all yesterday that could be wanted in that way, for a month to come."

Mrs. Valacort laughed: "That's a business 'still beginning never ending,' as you'll find by experience, but I shall not insist upon your sharing it when fresh air may be more beneficial to you.—I have appointed James to be your *Laquais de place* while you stay; so tell him, Bonaire, to be ready to attend Miss Villars in an hour's time."

Emily's eyes sparkled with pleasure at the substitution of an agreeable walk to the miseries of shopping: the Park had been an object of interest to her from her first glimpse of it out of the balcony, and she had almost despaired of ever being allowed time to enjoy it. She would willingly have dispensed with the appendage of the servant, and couldn't understand why her brother was not a sufficient protection; but was over-ruled by her

aunt, who astonished her with the information, that the protecting her might bring her brother into difficulties, if the respectability of a livery servant did not ward off the danger of insult. This being settled,

“ I hope, dear aunt,” said Emily enquiringly, “ fortune continued favourable to you, after the disturbance I so awkwardly caused at the card table, last night?”

“ No ; I lost ; but nothing worth speaking of : I never play deep.”

Poor Emily, whose slumbers had been broken by melancholy reflections on Mrs. Valacort’s turn for gambling, brightened up. “ Then, it was a piece of wit of Lord Leonard Ormsby’s, to say that two deals might transfer forty pounds of your property into his pocket.”

“ No, little simpleton ! he said true enough ; but that’s not called deep play ! deep play goes by hundreds, and I

never so much as bet a pony on the rubber."

"The idea of that bet, is taken, I conclude, from the Comte de Grammont!" said Henry, "and I hope they follow up his joke of giving a horse for card money \*, by allotting a colt, or a donkey at least, for that purpose!"

"Not quite so spirited as that!" returned Mrs. Valacort, amused with the allusion; "but I suppose you know a pony means a half rouleau."

"I am obliged to confess," resumed Henry, "that the explanation leaves me as much in the dark as the expression."

"Mercy defend us, Henry! what Gothic ignorance of club terms! that all this should be Hebrew and Greek to Emily is excusable, but I declare if you do not get better initiated in worldly knowledge, I shall blush to own you

\* See *Memoires du Comte de Grammont.*

for my nephew ; why then, a rouleau in the days of guineas — ”

“ May I not plead an extenuating alibi there ? ” interrupted Henry, “ I think I was not brought to light in those days.”

“ But the name has remained in full force, though the specie has disappeared ; so your salvo will not exonerate you ; know then, that a rouleau meant fifty guineas, neatly put up in paper, sealed at both ends, and circulated from hand to hand, upon good faith, at the card tables without counting ; of course, your comprehension can now reach to the discovery that a half rouleau will be five-and-twenty ! ”

“ Why nearly ; but still how it came to be called a pony ? ”

“ O ! that arose from a joke at one of the clubs ; a member declared at his entrance, that he was determined not to rise without winning a rouleau, as that would exactly purchase a horse he had

just seen ; the game broke up, however, when he had only won half a rouleau. “Now you must be content with a pony!” observed a wit, and from that time the name has passed current. So now, Henry, do give yourself the credit of knowing something about clubs, as opportunity may offer of retailing this anecdote.”

“How lamentable!” said Emily to her brother, in their subsequent walk, “to find my aunt one of the most dissipated women in London!”

“You do her injustice in calling her so,” he replied; “for a woman of ton I have heard her reckoned quiet.”

“Dearest Henry! what then may the dashers be?”

Henry gave her such an account of some of them, as almost made her hair stand on end, though it imparted a degree of comfort respecting Mrs. Valacort.

They had not proceeded far, when they were joined by Lord Cranmore. Having called to enquire for Emily, after

her fright, he had been informed by Mrs. Valacort that she had sent her to recover a little bloom in the Park.

An extraordinary flashy equipage caught their eye. "Lady S—— S—— out at this early hour!" exclaimed Lord Cranmore, "when only nurses and children can be the expected beholders!"

Emily was surprised and amused with the explanation of the splendid decorations of the carriage. "That name," continued she, "brings to my recollection the invalid children Lord Leonard took such an interest in at Your Lordship's cottage, pretty creatures! we used to admire them when we met them in our walks! I hope they quite recovered their health."

"No; I can't say they—Oh! yes, quite!—that is—I beg pardon, I don't very well know," stammered out Lord Cranmore, in extreme confusion.

The name having caught Henry's ear likewise, who had been giving way to a

fit of absence, now starting from it, he exclaimed, “ A whimsical-enough circumstance occurred yesterday, when I went to enquire for Your Lordship at the Marquis of Kingsboro’s: the porter, on casting his eye upon my card, said, if I had any very particular business, I might possibly meet with you at No. 10. Norfolk-Street. I certainly had no such plea; but wishing to see you, and thinking of no other Norfolk-Street than that I so constantly passed in my way to my chambers, I took my chance of finding you—”

“ I was at the drawing-room,” interrupted Lord Cranmore, precipitately, “ most fortunately engaged in Miss Vil-lars’s service! did she tell you?” —

“ O! yes; and I wished for an opportunity of making my acknowledgments yesterday after dinner, but something or other constantly came in the way.”

“ Not the smallest occasion for any thing of the sort!” again interrupted

Lord Cranmore, with increased confusion at having, in his eagerness to ward off the subject, forgotten that Henry had been present at all that passed at dinner relative to poor Emily's morning discomfiture.

"But I was going to tell you of my blunder," resumed the unconscious Henry: "When I got to No. 10. of Norfolk-Street, the Strand, I found the door of the house open, and a tradesman standing within; finding he was waiting the return of a servant, I waited likewise: in a minute, a little rosy-cheeked cherub popped her head out of the parlour, but, on seeing me, slammed the door to again, but not before I had caught sight of a very pretty-looking young woman, which convinced me I was wrong: I stopped, however, for the servant to direct me, but she could tell of no lord in that street; this was Mrs. Sidney's, and I might go into the parlour and ask her mistress, if I pleased, she

said ; this gracious proposal I prudently declined. The girl spoke with a north-country accent, and did not seem much *au fait* of London manners, so I may do her mistress injustice ; but you'll allow it took the agreeable turn of an adventure, if a more chivalrous wight than I can boast myself to be, had chosen to follow it up. I conclude *new Norfolk-Street* is where the porter meant to send me."

Lord Cranmore had dropped behind during this speech, and as Henry turned to appeal to him for the direction, he suddenly put his handkerchief up to his face, saying, in a half whisper, "Have the goodness to make my excuse to Miss Villars ; my nose has just gushed out with blood!" And he darted through the nearest gate, and disappeared.

Emily overhearing the whisper, attributed his evident confusion to finding himself unwell, and Henry had not particularly attended to it.

As they returned from their walk, wishing to show his sister Grosvenor-Square, he had brought her out at Grosvenor-gate. Passing along South Audley-street, they found themselves in a crowd at the door of a poulterer's; the tone of a very distressed female voice caught their ear, and they enquired what was the matter?

"Matter enough, sir;" answered a respectable looking tradesman—"These are honest people as ever broke bread, but they serve the quality for the most part, and as I tell my wife, that goes farther in honour than in cash; she's mighty apt, sir, to think it a great matter if she can clap a title down in her book."

"Well, but what has happened here?"

"Why, as far as I can find, the bailiffs wants to take the man to prison, and its my belief its a malicious arrest; for the wife, she showed by the books as there's more money due to them, by hundreds, than this here paltry debt; and the chil-

dren they cried very hard, and the bailiffs doesn't seem so savage-like as some are ; so they've agreed to wait till the shop-boy goes round the corner, to see if he can get payment from a customer."

Just then the lad returned, with a dismal countenance,—“ The housekeeper's not within, and the squire's rode out on horseback, and madam have got one of the r——l family visiting, and there's all the grand servants in the hall, and the lady can't be spoken with.”

“ Aye, that's the way,” resumed the tradesman ; “ never can be spoken with when a poor shopkeeper.”—

Here the poor woman's screams of vexation and disappointment broke into his observation. “ It must be the will of God !” she cried, wringing her hands, “ for sure it must, that poor Thomas should go to prison ; for these here customers used to be the best pay that ever was. I can't hear of no ruin going on—”

"Does my uncle deal with these people, James?" Emily asked eagerly.

"Yes, ma'am; he's our poult erer."

"It must—it must be them she is speaking of!" exclaimed Emily—"What is the name of the family you sent to?"

"Squire Valacort's, ma'am."

"Oh, for Heaven's sake, Henry! entreat the bailiffs to have patience while I go to my aunt."

One of the bailiffs had actually some knowledge of the people, and was willing to give them all the chance he could; so he readily listened to Henry's persuasions, and prevailed with his associate to wait the result of the young lady's interference.

"God bless you! you're as good natured as you're pretty;" cried some of the bye-standers, as they made way for Emily along the pavement. She rather flew than ran; her mind wholly engrossed with what she conceived to be a case of (alas, that it were!) *unparallel*-

*leled* hardship. She neither heeded the r—l carriage at the door, nor the servants in the hall, nor yet the information Bonaire was endeavouring to impress upon her, of the visitor that was with Mrs. Valacort : but hurrying eagerly on, rushing past Bonaire across the backstairs which communicated with the boudoir, she exclaimed, as she opened the door, “ O, my dear aunt! your poor poultreer, Gibson !”—

Mrs. Valacort, quite shocked at this total disregard of etiquette, interrupted her with an air of some displeasure. “ Is it possible, Emily, you did not know who was here ?” and immediately begged leave to present her, making an apology, at the same time, for her total ignorance of the rules “ of high breeding.”

The D— was literally kept silent by his surprise. It was not, indeed, well possible to imagine a more striking object than she, at that moment, exhibited ; her beauty heightened in the extreme by

the glow of exercise; her fine eyes sparkling with strong unaffected interest for the objects of her solicitude; the artless simplicity of her manner, and the excessive and almost overpowering confusion that followed upon her being made sensible of her indecorum, was altogether so perfectly new to him, that he actually stood for a minute at a loss how to address her.

Without waiting for it, however, she recurred to her object. “ May I not speak to you for one instant in the next room? indeed the case admits of no delay”—she whispered, as Mrs. Valacort drawing back, kept repeating, “ Impossible, Emily! impossible!”

“ It seems to be an act of compassion that Miss Villars has so much at heart,” said the D——; “ and if it cannot be imparted in my presence, I must revert to my Italian breeding, and with a ‘*levo l'incommodo*,’ however unwillingly, make my exit.”

Emily, recovering some composure from the affability of this speech, replied, “I am quite sure that the urgency of the distress will plead my excuse with your R—H—for relating it in your presence;” and with the utmost simplicity and feeling, she proceeded to state what had happened.

The D—— paid the greatest attention to her little narrative.

“Depend upon it, Emily, there’s some imposition in the business,” said Mrs. Valacort; “we owe no bill to that amount.”

“The poor woman appealed to her books.”

“It was but last week I gave Walker money for the month’s bills.”

“But the boy said she was not within, and she may not yet have paid them.”

“I am really quite shocked at entering into all this before your R————; will you forgive me if I satisfy this anx-

ious child's solicitude by ordering my housekeeper into the next room?"

"I earnestly request you would; Miss Villars has deeply interested me in the result; and I am not wholly free from apprehension that I may be found in those books. It strikes me that I know the name."

Bonaire brought word Mrs. Walker was not within.

"Oh! good heavens! the poor man will be dragged to prison!" cried Emily, in an agony.

"It would be no great matter to advance the sum," said Mrs. Valacort, "if I had not unluckily emptied my card-purse last night, and been prevented going to my bankers yesterday."

Emily gave a sigh to the manner in which the money had gone. "And that's called not playing deep," thought she, "when the sum would have saved a family from ruin!"

"Besides," continued her aunt, "I am not at all sure we do deal with these people; you are not up to London tricks, Emily."

"James said they were your poulters; and don't they sign a receipt when they are paid? Might we not refer to that?"

"Yes; certainly," replied Mrs. Valancourt; "but I don't know where to lay my hand upon the bill; and this really is a shocking bore to his R———."

"By no means. I have not had my interest so much awakened this long time; and I feel it incumbent upon me to enquire whether any irregularity in my payments may have contributed to this distress; I shall feel bound to make an atoning confession to Miss Villars at the Duchess of Castlehaven's this evening, if I find it so. You propose being there, I hope," he added, as he took his leave.

"But still it may be hours before any good results from this; and the poor man

will be dragged away in the meantime. What can be done?" cried Emily, in the greatest agitation.

"I really do not know," replied her aunt, "except ordering Walker to be sent to me the moment she returns."

"But, in the meanwhile, if you could just ascertain the date of the bills last paid. My uncle may happen to come in, and have money sufficient by him."

Emily was so very urgent, that Mrs. Valacort saw there was no escaping from the trouble she was so reluctant to take; and when she opened her secretaire, and Emily saw the state of chaos it was in, she no longer wondered at the difficulty of ascertaining the matter; for Mrs. Valacort by no means carried her visiting regularity into her household concerns.

One of the first bills that fell into her hand happened to be the poultcher's. "So far lucky, however," she exclaimed, "and see the date; — the very last week!"

"But I don't see it receipted!" said Emily.

"No! how is that? They are always paid and receipted before they are returned to me. This is some strange neglect. And here's the butcher's bill not receipted! What can this mean? 'Tis well you called my attention to the circumstance, Emily. It requires an explanation at any rate."

They were here most agreeably interrupted by Henry Villars. "Well, dear Emily, the poor people are rescued from their distress," he exclaimed; "and it really was quite a malicious arrest."

"But how?—How?"—cried she, eagerly.

"The D—— of ——— stopped at the door, and sent in, to inquire of the woman whether he were owing any thing there? She showed him his name scratched out for a considerable bill the very last week. Then, said he graciously, I know nothing better to be done at present than to give you an order upon my

steward for fifty pounds in advance on the next bill; as that is the sum I hear you have to pay. It would have done your heart good, Emily, to see the silent tear of gratitude that trickled down the poor woman's cheek, for she could not speak ; — and the acclamations and shouts of the crowd. O that the great were aware how condescending benevolence becomes them!"

" Well, then, I must forgive all the indecorums Emily has been guilty of this morning," said Mrs. Valacort, " since they have produced so good a result ; and now do let this troublesome business rest, child ! I am weary of the sight of these bills," huddling them all together, and stuffing them back into the secretaire, " we shall hear Walker's solution of the unreceipted ones. It would be an endless job to sort them all ; and I have to impart all the messages left for you during your walk. Did Lord Cranmore join you ? He was the first that called."

"He did, but was seized with a bleeding at the nose, and obliged to leave us," said Emily.

"Next came Sir Edward Arundel. I told him where he would find you."

"We saw nothing of him."

"No; I suppose Lady Laura Belmont laid violent hands upon him. She and Lord Belmont also called at an hour so undue for them, I should scarce have supposed them out of bed; but it was her impatience to see you, her brother said. How came you not to tell me, Emily, what intimate friends you and she were?"

"I have scarce had time to tell you any thing yet, my dear aunt," Emily replied.

"Sunday is a good gossipping day. During an airing in the Park you shall tell me every thing; — but about Lady Laura I was going to say, I was surprised when she sent in her name to me; for, to tell you the truth, she is no favourite of

mine. I have kept back from her for jilting a very worthy young man ; but, as *your friend*, I —”

“ I have had no reason of late to think my friendship of much value to her ; so pray don’t do any thing on my account,” said Emily, very much fearing Lord Belmont might be prompting this forwardness in his sister.

“ Well ; she left a message for you, however. She said, that she rides most days, and will call for you.”

“ But I have no horse in town,” Emily answered.

“ So I told her,” continued Mrs. Valacort, “ but Lord Belmont said, Lady Sabina was prohibited from riding at present ; and her horse is a very safe one, and quite at your service.”

“ O ! I can’t accept of it, indeed,” cried Emily, with quickness.

“ You are afraid of riding in the Park, I see ; but there is nothing in it, really. Your uncle will attend you, once or twice,

till you get broke in ; and Lord Belmont volunteered his services at all times. 'There ! do fold these notes,'” tossing her some she had been writing during this conversation. “ A-propos of Lord Belmont, though,” she continued, “ didn’t I once hear something of a flirtation between you and him ? That would have been a very pretty match ! How came you to let him slip ? — Lord bless me, child ! how pale you are again become, now the glow of exercise has subsided. Just as I thought, you have taken too long a walk ; and I must leave you at home to recover, or I shall get no credit by you at all. Do, ring the bell for my carriage, Henry.”

Emily availed herself of her aunt’s interpretation of her paleness, and expressed herself thankful for being left at home.

“ O ! and Lord Belmont apologised for his lady’s not calling, being in a family-way, and much indisposed ; and

hoped you would wave ceremony, and all that ; and Lady Laura wants you to go with her into their private box at Drury-Lane to-night. Lord ! I had like to have forgot half."

" But I hope, I needn't go to the play without you, dear aunt."

" Needn't !" repeated Mrs. Valacort, laughing, " No ; to be sure. It was meant as a great favour. Private boxes are in the utmost request. But it was very thoughtless in me not to decline that at once. You would never have been fit to go with me afterwards. So write your excuse ; and then do keep quiet, and recover your looks. Goodbye ! Walker not come in yet, Bonaire ?"

Being answered in the negative, she departed.

## CHAP. X.

LORD BELMONT, from the disappointment of not seeing Emily at Mrs. Waller's assembly the preceding evening, had been doubly anxious to attend Mrs. Valancourt's breakfast-table next morning, to ascertain the means of meeting in the course of the various engagements of the day with *her*, who had now recovered all her power over his mind ; and he gave way to the impulse without a moment's consideration of those consequences from which he had once so conscientiously shrunk. He had now breathed a contaminated air ; and it had blasted the feelings which the re-action of Emily's virtues, and not his own principles, had originally excited in his breast.

He knew his sister would prove an useful auxiliary ; so he had called upon her to accompany him. But although he routed her out so much before her usual breakfast-time, they were too late to catch Emily.

In justice to Laura, however, it must be said, that in this pursuit of her brother's, she was not a willing assistant ; her interest lay the other way. She was anxious to keep up a conjugal harmony that might defeat the Duke of Ulswater's views with Lady Sabina. She had bestowed much ineffectual ingenuity on devising the means of prolonging the deception, to which Lord Belmont's vanity had made him such a ready dupe. He had found all the so strongly painted partiality evaporate in discontent, at the first absurd whim with which he had objected to comply, after having indulged fifty equally unreasonable ; and heard his loving consort lament having given him the preference to another suitor, who

had lately come into an immense property, “and would, she was sure, have been upon his knees in humble adoration of her beauty and accomplishments, from morning till night; and have thought nothing too much that could have gratified her slightest wish: that was the sort of husband she felt herself entitled to expect.” Laura, who had been present at this agreeable discussion, endeavoured to conciliate matters, by afterwards pointing out to him the unlimited blind indulgence to which her parents had accustomed her; and how naturally a first attempt at contradiction might provoke her to say what she was far from feeling. “Who was there that might not in a pet utter what they would give the world, upon a moment’s reflection, to recal?” she asked.

“But where is her mind?” he would exclaim. “Good God, Laura! when I compare her insipid matter-of-fact conversation with the fulness, the variety, the

inexhaustible stores of Emily Villars's, I am ready to destroy myself."

"Lord! my dear brother, what unreasonable complaints! What man of fashion seeks a conversable companion in his wife? or could find time for conversation if she were so? If you had been to pass your life in the country indeed, it would have been another thing; but *here* — you have the most beautiful and most accomplished wife in England, whom the whole fashionable world looks up to, — whose alliance is an honour to us all; and because she is not a conceited blue stocking, you are dissatisfied. When you want conversation go to the Alfred; or if you wish for the relaxation of cards, to White's. There's no end of resources in London, without being dependent on a wife for them. And keep this in mind, Charles, if you neglect Lady Sabina, there will be plenty come forward to make her amends."

This last consideration had kept Lord Belmont's discontent within bounds, till the sight of Emily at Belmont Park had made him careless of consequences, by rekindling a flame that had only lain dormant. But, ah! how wide now of its original purity!

On the other hand, when Lady Sabina complained of her husband's coldness and neglect, Laura reverted to the established customs of the world, and that quintessence of decorum, Lady Saltland, who would never bear to have her son lay himself open to ridicule by public attentions to his wife.

"I'm sure I was a great fool, then, to marry, with the whole world at my feet, if neglect was to be the necessary consequence."

"But, my dear Sabina, haven't you the whole world at your feet still?"

"Yes; but then you know, the least little preference I were to show to any

body would immediately draw all the old cats upon my back."

"Preference! Certainly,—your true glory is in the *number* of your slaves. You must not allow yourself to show a *preference*, assuredly; and if I might advise, you should be particularly upon your guard against the Duke of Ulswater. He is said to be extremely insidious, and might alarm Charles."

"I should have no objection to create such an alarm, if it would make him behave better."

"That's a hazardous game to play, though; and the world is not apt to be indulgent to it."

Laura knew better than what she here advanced. 'The world is but too apt to be indulgent till the husband chooses to take the alarm; but this was before the Easter visit to the Park, and she had great hopes of securing the Duke to herself, if she could induce Lady Sabina to repulse him. When she afterwards,

however, played Henry Villars off upon him in vain, she began to fear the business was desperate ; though, still unwilling to relinquish all hope, she continued to keep her invention upon the rack to conciliate matters between the right honourable pair.

In agreeing to Lord Belmont's proposal of visiting Emily, there was, however, the purpose of obtaining admission to those select parties, so long the objects of her ambition, to be answered ; and, therefore, Laura assented without hesitation ; and forced her way, by sending up her name, and a message for Emily respecting the play, which in common civility compelled Mrs. Valacort to admit her.

Finding Sir Edward Arundel there, she had seized upon him to walk with her and her brother down to the Horse Guards, " where he was going to attend his office," she said, " and she should want an escort back, as she did not like walking through the Park with a servant only."

Sir Edward having assured himself where he might see Emily in the evening, and enjoy the luxury of hearing the name of Sophia pronounced, professed his readiness to attend Lady Laura.

It was between three and four when she returned to Seymour-place ; where she found Lady Sabina, who now breakfasted in bed, just up, and not in one of those sweetly placid moods so becoming to her beautiful features, when she produced them to an admiring world. Her Ladyship was far from being pleased to

— “ find herself  
As women” (do not) “ wish to be, who love” (their  
beauty better than) “ their lord.”

and unluckily, her looks were more than commonly affected by her situation. The moment Laura appeared she began, —

“ What in the world could possess Belmont to offer my services as chaperon to that Miss Villars ? ”

Laura was well aware what pos-

sessed him ; but she prudently replied, “ O ! it was merely an offer of courtesy ! a civility due to an old country neighbour ; he knew Mrs. Valacort had declared she would not let her stir without her, and that you were quite safe from being called upon.”

“ I’ve no objection to an unmeaning piece of civility, if that’s all ; but I really do not yet think myself degraded into the office of chaperon ; tho’ Heaven knows what I may come to ! did you ever see such a figure as I look ? so wan and pale — Heigho ! it was in an evil hour, I’m sure, that I agreed to marry ! — happy Laura ! with your blooming looks ! — You have been walking ; have you seen any thing of the Duke ? ”

He was going into Hyde-Park, as I crossed Piccadilly, and asked, whether we were likely to take an airing this morning ?

“ I should hate to have him see me in broad day-light this figure ; in an evening

I am better, and rouge gives a little life to my eyes."

" Yes ; I said you were not likely to be out this morning — Belmont had told me you were worse than usual."

" I wish you hadn't said that ; for if he thinks I'm too ill to admit him, he'll not call after his ride ; and with a veil, and my large bonnet, my looks won't so easily be observed ; I think the air may do me good." And she rung and ordered the barouche.—" If you are tired, Laura, or have any thing else to do, I shan't mind going alone."

" I shall certainly attend you, Sabina, because, as I have often told you, the duke, of all people, is the one I am most unwilling to have you talked of with."

" Yes, I believe you," with a sneer, that did not escape Laura ; " but I shall pick up half a dozen besides him, I dare say, and I shall stop in Arlington-street at my return ; I have not seen my mother these three days."

She hoped this might deter Laura from accompanying her, as the Marchioness had of late been somewhat repulsive in her manner, to this assiduous sister-in-law, which occasioned her rather to shrink from her cold looks ; but she quietly answered, " Then I may set you down there, and take the carriage on to St. James's Place, where I want to call ; my mother has taken ours into the city shopping, and I have no other conveyance."

Lady Sabina could not help herself, and reluctantly gave way.

The Duke soon perceived, and rode up to the carriage, and prevailed with the ladies to proceed to the gardens, where they were joined by a couple of his Grace's associates, who kindly took charge of engaging Lady Laura in conversation ; and one of them being an unmarried peer, the sisters returned in better humour than they had set out,

When Mrs. Valacort alighted at home, she again inquired for Walker.

"Not come in, and, I much fear, will not soon," said Bonaire, who was an attached Swiss servant Mr. Valacort had brought from abroad.

"What do you mean?"

"Did Madame give order for one trunk be sent to de villa at Richmond?"

"No; what should I order a trunk there for just now?"

"Ah, well! dat I was afear; it will be her own trunk."

"What should she be gone there for?"

"I am afear she be not gone dere, but make pretext; I am afear Madame will find she not pay de bills right."

Mrs. Valacort now became somewhat alarmed, as upon inquiry, it appeared, that the housekeeper had sent off this trunk very soon after hearing of the message from the poultreer, and had followed it almost immediately; still Mrs. Valacort flattered herself the damage would not prove considerable.

Emily earnestly begged her aunt to entrust her to look over the bills that had been huddled back into the secretaire, and engaged to sort them so as to ascertain those that were not receipted, and form some judgment of the injury sustained, before her uncle came in to dress for dinner. This was readily complied with, and it soon appeared that there was no receipt to any one of them ; and as they began with the arrival of the family in town, the loss must be considerably above a thousand pounds. This was certainly not ruinous, but it was very seriously vexatious ; particularly as Mr. Valacort was in this point so unfashionable, as to feel an anxiety to adapt his expenses to his means, and was an exact paymaster.

Mrs. Valacort was all amazement. “ Who could have suspected such a thing, when the bills were always so regularly brought back ! ” she exclaimed.

“ Did you never look at the bills ? ”

her husband asked, with an air of surprise, when she made this observation to him.

“ Why, you know, Lionel, I am kept in such an eternal hurry with one thing or other, that I actually never can command a moment—”

“ My dear Caroline,” he interrupted, somewhat gravely, “ if you would transfer to your domestic concerns a small portion of the regularity with which you manage your visiting list, it would really answer a very good purpose.”

“ I protest, my dear Lionel, I am as vexed as you can be, but the possibility of such a thing never entered my thoughts ; however, I am determined, for the future, to allot every fourth Sunday-morning to examining the bills returned to me, before advancing money for the next month.”

Emily could scarce help starting at the choice of *Sunday* morning for such a purpose, and expected her uncle to make

some observation upon it ; but he only said “ Well ! experience must be bought — I hope we know the worst of it ; ” and having given immediate orders to Bonaire to go round among the trades-people, and order in all their bills, he retired to dress, with a calmness that left Emily in doubt, whether his indulgent affection for his wife, or his philosophy, were most to be admired.

## CHAP. XI.

THE important evening now came that was to usher Emily into this great world, of which she began to feel considerable dread, from the consciousness of her perfect ignorance respecting it. "Do we go to more than one place to-night?" she timidly inquired.

"You have no chance of getting off with one place while you stay with me," was the answer; "but I mean to do no more than I can possibly help to-night, for your sake, to inure you by degrees to the toils of ton."

"I am quite sure the toils of my garden are less fatiguing; but where are we going then?"

"Why, only to Azeoli's concert, in the

first place, and then to the Marchioness of Amersham's small party, where I shall just stop to play one rubber, that I may not be quite set down as a deserter ; and then to the Duchess of Castlehaven's assembly, where you will see all the world."

The idea of beginning with a concert somewhat comforted Emily for the further proceedings, as there, nothing need be done but sit down quietly and listen ; and she was sure of being delighted by the performers she had heard named.

She was alarmed to hear the carriage ordered to the Countess of Hindford's. "I thought we were going to Azeoli's concert?" she said.

"So we are ; it is held at the Countess of Hindford's to-night."

"O, I misunderstood you ; I imagined it had been a subscription concert."

"So it is ; but people are willing to lend their house for it, because it's very convenient to give your acquaintance a musical treat, at the easy rate of lights

and refreshments ; a concert was an expensive undertaking, when the performers were all to be paid."

" But I suppose those who could not afford that expense were not bound to give concerts."

" O yes ! concerts are quite the rage ! every body gives them in some way or other."

" But how do those who adopt this convenient mode know that they shall like to visit all the subscribers ?"

" Lord bless me, child ! how can you think of such a thing ? Who cares about the subscribers ! *they* indeed usually come off but second best ; for the lady of the house, of course, invites all her own musical acquaintance."

" But that is hard upon those who pay their money."

" Not at all ; their object is answered by getting the *entrée* to houses, of which they would not otherwise see the inside ; and having it to say, ' When I was at

the Duchess of this, or Lady t'other's, so and so.' — O ! it's all vastly well understood on both sides."

Emily did not care to utter what occurred to her upon the subject, but could not help thinking it was an odd sort of world she was getting into.

Upon their entrance at Lady Hindfort's, they found the first act just over, and every creature in motion, to make their way into the room where the refreshments were set out.

Several, in squeezing past Mrs. Valacort and her niece, nudged each other, with a half whisper of "*That's her!*" Emily looked round once or twice to see who the *her* was, but discovered nothing particular in those upon whom her eye fell, and thought no farther of it.

After being most uncomfortably shoved about, they finally reached the upper end of the room, and took their seats near the orchestra, "for the facility of getting away through the boudoir without mak-

ing a disturbance," Mrs. Valacort said ; and soon after, the music was resumed. Sit still, the company now for the most part did, that is, such a proportion of it as could find seats in the music-room ; but as to listening, it seemed to be the last object of the audience, whose *recitative* at times so completely overpowered the instruments, that Emily was out of all manner of patience.

At length, however, a favourite song, by a favourite singer, produced silence ; and just then Mrs. Valacort whispered her niece, " You'll wish to hear this, and I see somebody in the other room I want to speak to ; so I shall steal out by this boudoir door and go round ; and after the song we must proceed to our small party, you may therefore follow me by the same way, and you'll find me near the outward door ; meanwhile, I have desired Mrs. Stanmore to take my seat, that you may not remain *isolée*." And off she glided through the door that was close to them.

"To be sure my aunt's coming to music is an odd fancy!" thought Emily: "it can only be to oblige me, and in this way, it is so very tantalising! and to leave me with an utter stranger too!" She sat in dread of every pause in the song being the last, not merely from her admiration of it, which was really great, but from the bewildering sensation of not knowing what to say to her chaperon, nor how to find courage to rise and follow her aunt, through unknown ways, and strange servants.

Sir Edward Arundel, however, at this moment, to her inexpressible relief, caught her eye, and came to her rescue, engaging to pilot her safely to Mrs. Valacort. As she rose to go, she courtesied an acknowledgment of the stranger's protection, who contented herself with a slight nod of the head in return, and there ended that distress.

Sir Edward saw them safely into their carriage, and Mrs. Valacort offered him

a place in it, if he were going to Lady Amersham's.

"I am ear-bound here," he replied; "and it would require harmony such as I have heard at the Priory, to tempt me away before it is over; but I shall see you at the Duchess of Castlehaven's."

"What a Goth, to prefer nightingales to Catalani!" cried Mrs. Valacort.

"He must be a bold man that would venture to acknowledge as much," said Emily, well aware of his allusion, but not wishing just then to enter into the explanation.

At Lady Amersham's they were going up to her quadrille-table, when a wave of the hand accompanying her nod of recognition, showed the moment to be unfavourable for an introduction. Mrs. Valacort therefore, moving on to the Marquis's whist-table, said, "I see the agony of a Vole in Lady Amersham's countenance, so we must not approach her now — Miss Villars, my lord!"

"How opportunely you are come," he replied to Mrs. Valacort as he smilingly bowed to Emily; "we were just in danger of breaking up: we thought you had deserted us."

"You forget that I told you I should have chaperon duties to fulfil, and those don't square with the card-table," she answered.

"You have a *very fair* excuse to plead, we must all allow," he returned, with a look of admiration at Emily, that made her colour up to her eyes.

A friendly sign from Lady Amersham, now showed her awful crisis past, and Emily being in consequence led up to her, met with the most flattering reception.

"Now take a chair by me," said her aunt, cutting in at whist.

She did as she was desired, and sat quietly looking over the card-table, congratulating herself that there was nothing to be said or done there that could betray ignorance.

After some time, a middle aged, plea-

sant looking man, who had scarcely taken his eyes off her since her entrance, approached the table and said, "Mrs. Valacort, you must be so good as to present me to that pretty niece of yours ; she hangs out her grandmother's lure, and to one of the last century like me, that is quite irresistible."

As Mrs. Valacort was about to answer, her partner bluntly interrupted her with "I'll thank you, Maxwell, not to distract my partner's attention just now ;—we are playing short — four all — a very critical moment!"

"I can talk and play," said she.

"That you do talk and play is pretty evident," he replied, somewhat gruffly ; "whether you *can* is another matter."

Emily, whose blushes had been again called up by the quaint address of Colonel Maxwell, now blushed a deeper dye, at what appeared to her, unprecedented rudeness to her aunt ; who, being in fact however a careless player, and accustomed to

much sharper rebuffs, took it very good humouredly, and with a nod to the Colonel, only said, "I shall cut out after this rubber, and then be at your service."

"Now, pray tell me," said she, as she rose from the table, "before I introduce such an odd mortal as you to Miss Villars, what you mean by her grandmother's lure."

"Why, *a blush* is a thing so entirely out of date in the present generation," he replied, "that one must be nearly co-eval with her grandmother to read it aright; and if I do so, I have hopes of making discoveries as obsolete in her mind, as in her countenance."

"You will be an admirable assistant to *her* reading things aright," returned Mrs. Valacort, "if you are going to the Duchess of Castlehaven's to-night."

"If I had not intended it, I certainly should now," he replied: "shall I call your carriage?"

"I think we shall be too early," said Mrs. Valacort.

" My dear aunt ! every clock in these apartments has struck twelve."

" Aye, there again now !" cried the Colonel ; " your grandmother would have deemed this a very unmannerly mode of marking the lapse of time, when the business of ancient hospitality was to make people forget it."

" But in my grandmother's time," said Emily, " it was not, I believe, so parcelled out, and put to such numberless uses, as it seems to be here, where the clocks may rather be meant as a considerate attention to the duties of the company, which regularity alone can carry them through."

" That's a fling at me, saucy girl !" said Mrs. Valacort, with a smile ; " but come, let us take the hint then, and proceed. I rather expected Lionel to have joined us here, but I find the house is not yet up, so you shall squire us if you please."

Getting up to the Duchess of Castle-

haven's door at *la belle heure* was a matter of such difficulty, as terrified poor Emily almost out of her senses ; and the being kept for more than half an hour, amidst the cutting, lashing, swearing horrors, to which every fine lady is satisfied to devote a considerable portion of every evening, appeared to her so very formidable, that, had not Mrs. Valacort judiciously secured the protection of the Colonel, she might possibly have been obliged to take her niece fainting home, instead of exhibiting her to an admiring world, as she expected to do.

Colonel Maxwell, partly by persuasion, partly by pleasantry, and partly by interfering to keep Mrs. Valacort's own servants quiet, succeeded in dispelling Emily's dismay ; and she soon recovered her composure, upon finding herself safe within the doors.

Now again the unaccountable “*That's her!*” met her ear, and the quick motion with which she again turned round to

try, if possible, to discover its object, was not lost upon Colonel Maxwell : " Show me such another instance of simple unaffected modesty ! " said he to her aunt.

Little, indeed, could the unconscious girl imagine herself to be the object of this general curiosity ; little was she aware how, for the two past days, her name had resounded through all the fashionable boudoirs, and been bandied about at the dinner-parties ; for she had flattered herself with enjoying a happy obscurity in the midst of numbers ; nor could she imagine that *gossiping*, the appropriate avocation of country towns and villages, was a vice of high life ; and yet is it the truth, that the different sets of the fashionable world are, individually, as rapidly apprised, as minutely critical of each other's actions and motives, and as fertile in exaggeration, as the most assiduous frequenters of the chandler's shop in Squire Alworthy's parish could possibly have been.

The discomfiture of Miss Villars at the drawing-room — her *no-presentation* — her flaming feathers, extinguished by Lord Cranmore's opera-hat — her zeal for the poult erer ; and above all, her inconceivable ignorance of royal etiquette, bespeaking rusticity unequalled ; which, however, had not been so represented by the D——, who had upon that occasion been more charmed with “the breach,” than he could have been with “the observance” of it. All these novel occurrences were repeated in fifty different ways, together with as various descriptions of her person. She was a Juno — a Hebe — a Niobe — a Venus — a Minerva ; — any thing, in short, but what she was finally set down for, by Lady Diana Dashmont ; — “a blushing, sheepish-looking, unfashioned, pretty-enough, country girl ; that was all, upon her honour, she could see in her ; and wondered Mrs. Valacort did not keep her up for a week, and give her the advantage of some of the

various improvers of manners to *redresser* her *gaucheries*, that she might come out with some *eclat*."

This decree had been promulgated at the concert, and just made its way to the Duchess of Castlehaven's before Emily appeared. It must be confessed, indeed, that expectation had been raised to the *sovra umano*, and a sensation of disappointment therefore prevailed, more or less, according to the disposition of the discusser, but certainly very generally; for over-commendations will 'damn,' as surely, if not more so, than "faint praise."

Even the Duke, when he afterwards joined them, was compelled to lower the estimate he had made in the morning, of the wonderful charms, which he had not a little contributed to blazon forth. Indeed, the extraordinary animation that overspread her glowing features, when she had rushed into his presence, combined with the incomparable sweetness that was their habitual expression, had

given a character to her beauty that did not naturally belong to it, for she was not formed to dazzle. The radiance having subsided, seemed now to sink her as much below the admiration to which she was really entitled, as she had been raised above it; she could not converse for five minutes, however, without winning her way into feelings of far higher interest, than what could be inspired by features only.

Emily, abashed and confounded, when she could no longer mistake the eyes, *lorgnettes*, and whispers, that now marked her for their object, entreated her aunt to let her get to some seat in a corner, where she might escape observation; this, with the assistance of Colonel Maxwell, was accomplished; and very soon after, Lord Cranmore and Sir Edward Arundel made their way to the snug retreat, where Mrs. Valacort would never have been satisfied to let her niece remain in quiet, had she not overheard some ill-

natured sarcasms passed upon the beauty she had so much prided herself in having to exhibit. Surprised and provoked, a cloud of displeasure had gathered on her brow, as she sat revolving, how it could happen! not at all aware of all that she herself had done towards it, by injudiciously extolling Emily's charms, wherever she had gone for the last two days; for, in fact, both Mr. and Mrs. Valacort had been so surprised and captivated with an exterior of such uncommon loveliness, that they could scarce talk of any thing else.

Emily's renewed pleasure on the approach of Sir Edward Arundel was as naturally expressed, as it was truly felt; and construing this friendship, on her part, into an earnest of her sister's feelings towards him, his gratification was unbounded; and so great was his solicitude for Agatha, and so minute his enquiries into her progress, as necessarily brought Mrs. Delmere's name into play,

and the expression it called up in his countenance was such as to lead Mrs. Valacort, who did not overhear their conversation, into the belief that Emily had captivated him. Lord Cranmore's attentions were also sufficiently obvious; and these two agreeable circumstances soon restored her brow to its wonted good-humoured expression.

In speaking of the Priory, Sir Edward adverted to Mr. Villars's gout, and the probable influence of the severe weather upon it.

"He is peculiarly susceptible of cold," said Emily, "and while we were in Devonshire, he told us his thermometer had been as low as twenty."

"My goodness! did you hear that?" whispered Miss A. to Miss B., who had just then come up arm in arm, for a stare at the 'Lion of the night:' "She talks about thermometers! she's a blue stocking, as sure as you're alive."

Sir Edward, who was acquainted with

her, overhearing the observation, said, “And an *elegante* is bound not to know a thermometer from a barometer, is she?”

“O, I beg your pardon; knowing is one thing, but talking of what one knows is another, and always affected.”

“One advantage might result from it though,” said Colonel Maxwell, “the conversation would often be short as sweet.”

Miss A. gave a toss with her head.

“Come,” resumed Sir Edward, “I’ll lay you the French bet *une discretion*, that you don’t know the one from the other.”

“Propose *une indiscretion*, and she’ll like it better,” said Colonel Maxwell.

“O you satirical wretch! who ever minds you?” cried Miss A.

“Well! leave him to his wickedness; and let’s hear what a barometer is!” continued Sir Edward, bent upon avenging Emily’s cause.

"Why, Lord bless me! it's a long piece of wood with a glass pipe—and numbers—and a round ball at the bottom."

"A happy description! and that ball contains—"

"Some sort of liquid that goes up and down the pipe."

Sir Edward smiled. "Well; and the use?"

"Dear! why to tell good and bad weather, and heat and cold."

"So much for meteorological skill! now for a thermometer!"

"O, why, a little glass thing as long as my finger, in an ivory tooth-pick case, to ascertain when to put coals on the fire."

This set all the listeners into a roar of laughter, who had not happened to meet with the Birmingham toy of that description; which, however, so far justified the young lady's knowledge, as that there actually was one of them lying on the

*chiffoniere*, in the Duchess's boudoir, which had been referred to, when, upon the sudden chill of a lost rubber, she had ordered the fire to be mended.

Miss A. insisted upon leading Sir Edward to conviction, but their progress was impeded by the Duke of ——, who was coming forward to Mrs. Valacort; when, to Emily's distress, she found herself obliged to become again conspicuous, by rising with her aunt, and forming a part of the circle that always marks the presence of royalty.

Being very particularly addressed by him on the subject of the morning's business, she felt called upon to rally her spirits and powers of conversation; and having been really much delighted with the manner in which his benevolence had shown itself, she, without the least intention of flattery, paid him two or three compliments with a grace of simplicity so new, as quite charmed him. He observed her cast a look of distress around

at the observation his notice was again drawing upon her, and condescendingly motioned to take a seat that was become vacant next to where she had been sitting ; the consequence was the dispersion of the surrounding crowd, and the relief of Emily's embarrassment.

" Do but conceive," said the undaunted Miss A., " do but conceive Miss Villars calling Mrs. Valacort her aunt in speaking of her to the Duke ! where can she have been educated ? "

" In a seminary that's quite out of date," replied Colonel Maxwell : " it is called the school of domestic affection."

" I declare you are almost as bad as a Methodist preacher," retorted the young lady ; and she confined the remainder of her observations upon Emily to the ear of her friend, where they met with a more congenial reception ; the whole being summed up by Miss B.'s remark in return, " That she must be a very experienced

coquette, to draw all these men about her so."

The Duke now rose to go, but suddenly looking back to Emily, said, " Shall you be at Lady ——'s card-party on Sunday?"

" O no, certainly not!" she exclaimed with quickness, in a tone almost of horror; but immediately recollecting the implied censure she was passing on her aunt, who might be in the habit of going there, she added more quietly, " I know nothing about cards."

" Is she a Methodist?" said a lady, who had just come in time to hear the question and answer.

" Exactly so much of one," answered Sir Edward, " as I would wish every woman to be, in whom I am at all interested."

" Dear, what an odd fancy!" was the reply, and she passed on.  
The groom of the chambers now came

up to Mrs. Valacort, and said, “ Her Grace had sent him to ask, whether she would cut in at whist.”

Emily, alarmed at the idea of being again left, cried, “ O what will become of me !”

Mrs. Valacort, smiling at her fright, replied, “ Tell the Duchess that it will not be in my power to play to-night. The crowd has been so great, I have not been able to make my way to her, but whenever I can get on, I am coming to introduce Miss Villars ; and now,” she continued, turning to Colonel Maxwell, “ ‘tis no great matter whether we get to her at all ; she’ll be delighted to hear there’s no stirring for the crowd, and think no farther about us.”

A considerable influx of men followed, upon the rising of the House ; amongst whom Mr. Valacort, Lord Leonard Ormsby, Lord Belmont, all made up directly to the aunt and niece.

Sir Marmaduke Ellingford, also, now

made his appearance, took his stand directly opposite to Emily, levelled his opera-glass to her face, and kept it stationary with unremitting perseverance for ten minutes ; fortunately unobserved by its object, who was earnestly engaged in conversation with Sir Edward Arundel.

Sir Marmaduke Ellingford was the finest of the fine men of the day ; the supreme umpire of taste, from whose verdict there was no appeal ; whose cravat, whiskers, paddings, were the models for all that aimed at fashionable distinction.

Such of his devoted imitators as were still remaining, now awaited with due deference to learn, what *they thought* of the new beauty.

The oracle at length broke forth.— “ That sort of natural bloom, arising from rude health, has long been exploded — not to be endured in any thing above a milkmaid ! give me the interesting paleness of Lady Maria ! — the

eyes are not ill-cut — want information tho' ! Lady Hester would know how to make the most of them, but this poor girl thinks they have only been given her to look with — cursed insipid altogether, I take it — nothing stylish — no air of fashion about her — Ah gad ! and blushes too ! — that's quite too bad, upon my soul ! ”

“ The features are regular, — and a certain sweetness in her smile ! ” was the observation one of the bye-standers hazarded, who, now and then, ventured to have an opinion of his own.

But he was taken up very short. — “ Features ! who takes any account of features ? expression, indeed, is something ! but, as to smiles and dimples, and that sort of thing, I'm sick of them ! unless, indeed, to display such teeth as Lady Sabina's ! ”

“ There is a bewitching air of modesty in her demeanour ! ” continued the daring assertor of his own observations.

"Modesty! — Aye — well — that may pass *pour la rareté du fait*, if, after all, it be not mere affectation! — but who is she? who brings her out?"

"Mrs. Valacort; she is her niece!"

"Mrs. Valacort! ah! *cela change la thése!* — then she may soon be made something of!"

Sir Marmaduke now drew nearer, and said, "Cranmore, I wish you'd introduce me!" with a motion of the head, directed to Emily.

"That's a liberty I really cannot take," said Lord Cranmore.

"How cursed formal!" then going round to Mrs. Valacort — "How do?" shaking hands. "Your niece, I'm told! pray name me to her!"

"Sir Marmaduke Ellingford, Miss Villars!" said Mrs. Valacort.

Emily made a bow of acknowledgment with more of graceful ease than he probably expected; so, making an effort at conversation, Sir Marmaduke began: —

"Never in town before, Ma'am, I conclude?"

"Never, Sir."

After a short pause—"Do you walk in Bond-street, Ma'am?"

"Sir!" somewhat surprised at the question.

"The Lady Dangervilles never fail—from five to six—and all the world, indeed; but it's a cursed bore to think of something to say, so I generally cut—*et tout est dit*, you know."

"I should conceive it soon might be," replied Emily, rather archly, for she was amused with a being so different from any she had yet met with.

"Do you ride in Hessians?" was the next question, after another little pause.

She was now utterly at a loss.

But he obligingly went on:—"Hoby's your only man for 'em! and, by-the-bye, as you are new to the town, let me give you a piece of advice, never call for Cedrati-ice at Owen's; it is incomparably better at Grainger's."

"Thank you, Sir, for putting me upon my guard!" scarce able to refrain from laughing at the air of importance that accompanied the caution; "but in all matters of moment I have recourse to my aunt."

"She might not be up to that tho', for it is only two days since Lady Maria made the discovery by being fortunately caught in a shower in Piccadilly, which obliged her to take shelter in Grainger's."

"How providential!" said Colonel Maxwell, who had been attentively watching Emily's countenance during this dialogue.

Here the interesting conversation was stopt by Mrs. Valacort's observing that, as the rooms were now thinned, it would be a good time to make their courtsey to the Duchess.

As they rose to go, Colonel Maxwell continued, laughingly, to Emily "Ah, 'what is friendship but a name!' that, of all the admiring host which surrounds the

' pink of men,' not one should have the charity to hint at the depredation that well-stuffed cravat is committing on that well-rouged cheek!"

" You can't be serious, in thinking it paint?"

" Nay, I call the cravat to witness ; look at the delicate tint tinging its edge from being so unguardedly raised the tenth of an inch too high."

No sooner did Mrs. Valacort and Emily quit their seat, than Sir Marmaduke took possession of it, exclaiming with a half yawn, " Cursed thin, to-night ! what's become of all the world, I wonder ? bring me some ice, Sir !" and then extending one leg upon the ottomane, and drawing the cushions so as to favour a gracefully recumbent posture, (from whence it will evidently strike the reader, that this was prior to the era of tight lacing, which somewhat impedes an elegant lounge,) he took to eating his ice in perfect style,

nodding approbation of it, as he proceeded to glass after glass, accompanied with the proper interjections of *gout exquis!* *bien pommadée!* &c.

There being still sufficient crowd about the door-way to delay their progress, Colonel Maxwell directed Emily's attention to the proceedings of Sir Marmaduke,—  
“ And now, do let me hear your opinion of that semblance of a man !” he said.

“ Singularly diverting !” she replied.

“ Would to Heaven he were singular !” returned the Colonel ; “ but, alas ! he is, as you may perceive, but the head — ‘ if *head* that may be called, which *head* hath none,’ of a tribe that infest these our fashionable circles ! a delectable compound of egotism, apathy, and impertinence !”

“ Would not insignificance be a sufficient characteristic ? I think you are rather severe !”

“ I confess it moves my spleen, when I see those libels on the male creation :—

things ‘without a name’\* courted—made up to, by the fair and fashionable, their impertinence tolerated; their fiat sought!—O! that women could be sensible of the mischief they have to answer for, by such encouragement!”

“ Do you pay our sex the compliment to think it would rest with us to counteract—”

“ Depend upon it,” he interrupted, “ men and women mutually spoil, or improve each other; if all the worthies of your sex treated *him* as you have done, the effects would soon appear.”

“ As *I* have done, Colonel Maxwell! what can you mean?”

“ I mean, that your mind is as transparent as your complexion, and that it will be in vain you may ever expect to disguise your feelings, Miss Villars. Your

\* They have since obtained one, of which the fame has spread, if Lady Morgan may be credited. See in her “*France*” the surprise of the Parisian ladies at the *Dandy*.

keen sense of the ridiculous was manifest through the playfulness of your answers, and if others would designedly evince as much, it might do good, for I could almost suspect his having been struck with it, by his not following you."

"Indeed, I hope you are mistaken : it would be intolerable presumption in me to aim at reforming, who know so little of the world I have just got into, that I go wrong at every step ; but you are such an observer that I must be upon my guard with you, I perceive."

"No, for Heaven's sake, throw off all guard ! and show yourself exactly as you are, and you may do more by your example, than volumes of precept could accomplish."

They now made their way towards the boudoir, followed by a host of men so conspicuous, and some of them in such high request with the husband-hunting spinsters, that ample amends were made for the mortifications of the evening, by

appearing before the Duchess with this brilliant *cortége*.

Neither mortification nor brilliancy had, however, made any impression upon Emily ; she conceived it to be the natural and distressing fate of a stranger to be stared at ; and her attendant beaux, she supposed, wished to pay their compliments to the lady of the house : the sensation uppermost in her thoughts was that of thankfulness, for the approaching end of the business of the night, as well as for being so surrounded, that Lord Belmont would not have an opportunity of addressing any thing particular to her.

The Duchess gave a look of much approbation, as Mrs. Valacort introduced her niece, and immediately said, — “Don’t run away, Mrs. Valacort ! I have ordered up some supper for these famished men that are just come in, and I depend upon you.”

A *petit souper* was of irresistible at-

traction, and, to Emily's regret, the proposal was instantly acceded to.

It was very shortly after announced ; and to her, who was unacquainted with the happy device of the letting-down supper-trays, it appeared to have risen as by enchantment out of the ground, when she found an elegantly covered table, in the very apartment she had but just before passed through.

A party of about a dozen sat down ; Lord Cranmore had secured his place on one side of Emily, and she looked towards Colonel Maxwell, in the hope that he would take the other, when Belmont slipped before him, saying, “ I beg pardon, Maxwell, but I am charged with a long message from my sister for Miss Villars !” and seated himself between her and the Colonel.

Emily, though somewhat disconcerted, assumed an air of cold dignity, and said,—  
“ It will be unnecessary for Your Lordship

to take the trouble of repeating it, as I mean to appoint a meeting with Lady Laura, as early to-morrow morning as she may be inclined to admit me."

Awed by a manner so different from any thing he had ever seen in her, he remained silent, with an air of mortified submission, but retained his seat, casting a resentful glance upon Lord Cranmore at the same time, towards whom she had directly turned.

It was rather remarkable that, however embarrassed Emily might at times feel, at an unexpected allusion to Lord Belmont, his presence never failed to restore her self-possession ; possibly, the levity of his manner impressed her with the instantaneous conviction, that he was no longer the Charles of her imagination, which, in his absence might, imperceptibly to herself, still continue to adorn him with some of the ideal virtues, in which she had once so fondly believed.

" Apropos ! " cried one of the com-

pany, as an accidental pause afforded the opportunity, “Have you heard of the elopement, Duchess?”

“No; who?”

“Mrs. Fairlawn, with Lord Dorman.”

“What upon earth could tempt them to elope? I thought it was all an understood thing between the husband and wife, on the principal of mutual forbearance.”

Emily laid down her knife and fork, in amazement.

“Why, so it was believed, but she seems bent upon marrying Dorman; and so, slight damages will be laid, and a divorce sued for.”

Emily’s eyes turned upon her aunt, expecting to see the expression reflected in them, of the feelings so marked in her own; but Mrs. Valacort took it very much in the light of an every-day occurrence, and only, said — “Mighty silly! to forfeit her place in society so causelessly! as Lady Dorman, she can’t be

visited. She's an agreeable woman, had a very pleasant house, and as long as her husband was satisfied, nobody would have drawn back."

" Her husband did not seem inclined to make any stir about the matter."

" No ; he began first, and retaliation is always fair."

" What an enviable fellow is Fairlawn, to recover his freedom !" exclaimed Lord Belmont.

" You should have reserved that observation till next year, Belmont," said Colonel Maxwell : " it is too bad in such early days to scoff at chains !"

" Galling chains ! God knows !" was the reply.

" Shame on you, Belmont !" continued the Colonel : " married to the finest woman in England, and utter such an expression ! take care some ' damned good-natured friend' don't report—"

" Ah, Maxwell, you are a happy bachelor ! you cannot enter into the feel-

ings of a wretched dog, who has been tricked out of an angel, to be linked to an ideot! You know not how I have been fooled!"

But Colonel Maxwell knew more than Belmont was aware of ; he was a distant relation of Lady Saltland's, and though not privy to all the Earl's manœuvres, he knew that a prior attachment had caused the alliance with Lady Sabina to be, for a while, doubtful ; he had even tried his influence to soften Lord Saltland in favour of his son's predeliction, and this had awakened a great interest in him, for the object of that predeliction.

Lord Belmont had spoken in a kind of half whisper, which, though apparently only addressed to his neighbour, it was impossible Emily should not overhear ; and her indignation, at being thus made to hear what was so very improper, betrayed itself in the variations of her countenance : she would have given the world

Lord Cranmore would speak to her, but he was not fluent in public.

"One only consolation there would be for me on earth," continued Lord Belmont, "and that is the friendship of the exalted woman I have lost, which might eventually also have a happy influence upon Lady Sabina, and reconcile me to my fate, but from this I am rigorously excluded."

"For God's sake, have done with conversation so ill-timed!" interrupted the Colonel: "if you really wish to confide grievances to a friend, command me at any time: my best advice shall be yours;—but—"

"Advice to blow out my brains! I know no other that can be of any avail, and, upon my soul, I have been more than once tempted to it."

Lord Cranmore, who had watched the changes in Emily's countenance, without guessing their origin, now said, anxiously, "I fear you are not well, Miss Villars!"

hours so different from those of the Priory, do not suit your lately-recovered health : will you allow me to convey a message from you to Mrs. Valacort ?”

“ It cannot now be long before she moves to go, and I am told, I must inure myself to these doings,” she replied ; “ but talk to me of the Priory, and I shall forget the lassitude, which, I must confess, I begin to feel.”

“ What observations would the adventure of Mrs. Fairlawn have called forth there do you think ?”

“ The very simple one, I believe, that, even setting every other consideration aside, no provocation from a husband can excuse a woman’s forgetting what she owes to herself.”

“ True, Ma’am, as you justly observe,” said a gentleman, catching her words, in part, from the opposite side of the table : “ a slighted woman takes a lover, in consideration of what she owes herself.”

“ I fancy that was not exactly Miss

Villars's observation," said Mrs. Valancourt, wishing to draw Emily out.

Emily, a good deal confounded, both with having been overheard and misrepresented, was still never wanting to herself in the cause of morals; and she replied, " You would indeed have reason to blush for me, Ma'am, if it were, but I had no intention of obtruding my unworldly notions, when they would be so misplaced."

" No, no! that would be 'Caviar to the multitude' indeed!" cried Colonel Maxwell, laughing. Emily, who had spoken from her feelings, without exactly weighing the construction her words might bear, was quite abashed at having them thus mischievously pointed as a sarcasm on the company.

Sir Marmaduke Ellingford having by this time finished his half-dozen glasses of ice, and seen the apartments nearly empty, now lounged into that, occupied by the supper-party, a slight inclination

of the head marking his polite notice of the lady of the house — “ Exquisite Maraschino ice, upon my soul, Duchess !” he said, “ who do you employ ? ”

“ My *chef de cuisine* officiates in the capacity of *confiturier* as well,” she replied.

“ Cherish him then as the apple of your eye : he is *inappreciable* ! ”

“ Have you supped, Sir Marmaduke ? — Here’s room.”

“ No, ’tis not my hour yet : I’m off to White’s.”

He now moved a few steps towards the door ; but stopping to take a survey of himself as he passed the looking-glass, he recollect ed the news of the day : — “ Oh ! have you heard of the elopement ? ” he said.

Being answered in the affirmative, and no second idea occurring to him, he quietly lounged out as he had lounged in.

Mrs. Valacort, perceiving her niece’s tired looks, rose to go, but the Duchess

exclaimed,—“ I lay an embargo on you three for a couple of rubbers more ; Mrs. Valacort ! Lord Belmont ! Lord Leonard ! you won’t desert me !”

“ I am not given to desert, you know, but this child really has been ill,” said Mrs. Valacort.

“ And can’t you trust to Mr. Valacort’s care of her, and let your carriage come back?—We’ll have mercy upon him after the fatigues of the House !”

This arrangement was assented to ; and as Emily was going, Lord Belmont said, “ I hope, Miss Villars, Mrs. Valacort repeated Lady Sabina’s message respecting her horse, as she is now prohibited from riding.”

“ I ought to beg Lady Sabina’s pardon, my Lord, for neglecting to request you would convey my acknowledgment for the obliging offer, but I am too great a coward to attempt an exhibition in Hyde Park.”

“ My sister would, I am sure, attend

you in any more private airing : she is quite lost for want of a companion on horseback."

" I shall easily satisfy Lady Laura, that I should be more of a drawback than an addition to her pleasure ; I have unfortunately increased in timidity."

" Come, Belmont ! come !" cried the Duchess ; " we are waiting for you !—Apropos ! Miss Villars, do you waltz ?"

" Me, Ma'am ! no, indeed ! I hope Your Grace don't suspect it !" exclaimed Emily, with the most eager *naïveté*.

The Duchess laughed, and Lord Cranmore cast a glance of such delight upon Emily as, happening to meet her eye, impressed her with the consciousness of a charm in his countenance she had not before remarked.

" I was only going to propose a little *dejeuné*, and practice here, with my nieces, on Tuesday morning," said the Duchess : " they have not, I believe, completed their set ; but I see you are not

yet quite up to us town ladies. She is, however, a pretty elegant creature for all that," continued the Duchess, turning to Mrs. Valacort, " and you will soon rub off her country rust."

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed Colonel Maxwell, " though the injury should not be quite as fatal as to Scriblerus's shield; depend upon it, any change must be for the worse!"

He was about to offer her his arm as he spoke, but perceiving Lord Cranmore's motion for the same purpose, he drew back, saying, "Ah, well! go together for a pair of unfashionables as you are! Would to Heaven!" he added, in a whisper to Mrs. Valacort, "he had the charge of her through life, but there's an awkward impediment in the way."

"What?"

"Don't you know?"

"No."

"Another time, then:—will you give me my soup to-morrow?"

"And every other day that you are inclined to take it."

"Have a care! the difficulty may be to get rid of me, now you have this attraction."

"Out upon you, for that unmannerly now! it would be a true touch of the woman to retract the invitation."

"But I rely upon another feminine attribute for averting your wrath."

"This is not your first trial of it, if you mean my good nature."

"I see I may safely leave the interpretation in your own hands; you will not make it very severe,—so good night! *a demain.*"

## CHAP. XII.

WHEN Emily saw Mrs. Valacort the next morning, “I hope,” she said, “the Duchess did not keep you longer than she talked of!”

“No, I took care of that: her nephew came from the club, and I made him take my place: I was at home before four: I dare say they went on long after day-light, but I always keep regular hours, as I told you.”

“Regular hours!” thought Emily. “Ah! how judicious in Miss J—— to endeavour at restoring ‘things to their right names;’ and how I do wish my poor aunt could find time to let me read the book to her!”

" By the way," continued Mrs. Valacort, " you are a sly little gypsey, after all, Emily, with your demure looks! here are you coquetting with no less than three of the first marrying men in the kingdom, — to say nothing of that Lord Belmont, whose manner to you I don't above half like? —"

The term *sly* was so very odious to Emily, and the accusation of coquetry so new, that she answered, with the utmost gravity, " My dear aunt, I am looking with impatience for one hour's respite from your unceasing occupations to explain some circumstances that will, I trust, convince you I do not deserve the epithet *sly*, and that I hold coquetry in abhorrence."

" Well, only don't make such an important matter of it, and to-morrow we will discuss it all at leisure."

Mrs. Valacort had set so much apart for Sunday-morning business, that Emily concluded she rose earlier than usual on

account of church, so she asked, “ Is your church near at hand?”

“ Church! O aye, true, you’ll want to go to church; let’s see! there’s South Audley Chapel just by! the Belmonts have a pew there: you might ask Lady Laura for leave to go into it: I dare say they scarce ever fill it themselves.”

“ Why mayn’t I go where you do?”

“ The thing is that I am apt to be late, and so I go to St. James’s Chapel, where that is of no great consequence, because I have the *entrées* of the Peeress’s closet, being an honourable, you know, (she was daughter to a Viscount,) but till you qualify, by giving your hand to Lord Cranmore, you can’t enjoy that privilege.”

Emily was hurt at the carelessness with which her aunt treated a subject of such moment; and turning to her uncle, with a very serious air, she said, “ I suppose there must be churches where a seat may be obtained by paying the pew-opener:

perhaps my uncle would be so good as to take me to one of those."

Mrs. Valacort, who really had once a right sense of her duties, and was now in fact more led away, from never giving herself time for reflection, than from actual dereliction of principle, felt rather confused, and said, "I assure you, Emily, when I am in the country I go to church very regularly."

"O! that you were there all the year round!" exclaimed Emily, from the bottom of her heart.

"Was there ever such an unconscionable wish!" she cried, and desirous to change the conversation, she asked Mr. Valacort, whether he meant to go to the opera.

"It has occurred to me that this dear girl would enjoy seeing the whole of it," he replied, "and that is more than you are up to!"

"Lud ha' mercy! I should die of it!" was the answer.

“ Then, my proposal is, that Emily and I should make luncheon our dinner, and take in overture and all: I shall enjoy it myself; for well as I love music, I have never heard that, nor even the whole of the first act yet.”

“ Pray settle it so, then, and much good may it do you!—I wish I liked music!”

“ But as you do not,” said Emily, “ I wonder you subscribe to so many concerts! for I think I have heard of one every night, beside the Tuesday and Saturday’s opera.”

“ When you have been with me a little longer, you will find out that all is done for fashion in London, and scarce any thing for pleasure: you can hardly conceive how one is harassed with the duties of society, and the penance one has to endure in conformity with the taste of the times.—What do you smile at?” addressing Henry, who was just come in time to hear this speech.

" To think how unlucky it is the days of convents should have passed away in this country:—with such a disposition for voluntary penance, what an edifying nun you would have made!"

" I declare, Henry, you are worthy to be a pupil of Maxwell's, who, by the bye, has invited himself to dinner here to-day Lionel! and I rather shrink from a *tête-à-tête* with him: he takes the liberty of lecturing me now and then, which I don't so well relish: I wish you'd come and protect me, Henry!"

" No, no; we must have Henry with us to the opera," said Mr. Valacort.

" Well; Maxwell is so eccentric that one need not much mind him, that's one good thing!"

" Is he?" said Emily, " he struck me as uncommonly agreeable!"

" *Cela va sans dire*,—you struck him, you know: those strokes are always mutual; but what is Bonaire bringing upon that great waiter? Oh, poor Emily!

all the ‘at home’s’ to you, in consequence of the tickets sent round! Now you’ll form a more competent notion of all that’s to be done and to be avoided; and here are twenty notes about my private box at Covent-Garden, — that’s another eternal torment there’s no doing without. Come, Bonaire, do rid us of these breakfast-things, and let’s set to work. Lord!” she exclaimed, as she was looking over the various cards to answer, “here’s another provoking blunder of that blockhead I have just turned away! — I have been avoiding this woman like the plague, and here’s her ticket! he must have sent mine to her, or she could never have ventured upon it.”

“Is she a woman of bad character?” inquired Emily, pleased, after what had passed the last night, to find her aunt making distinctions.

“I know nothing about her character,” was the reply: “that’s her own concern; she may be a very good sort of

woman, for any thing I can tell, but she's abominably *mauvais ton*, — be-diamonded from head to foot upon all occasions; so vulgar! I should be shocked to death to have her seen at one of my parties, — and lives in Bedford Square into the bargain!"

Mrs. Valacort was too busy sorting and writing, while stating all these insuperable objections, to observe the sorrowful surprise in Emily's countenance, at finding her aunt so very fine a lady.

Among the notes, was a proposal from Laura to take Emily to Kensington-Gardens, which Mrs. Valancort would not suffer her to decline, aware of the influence of air and exercise upon her looks. She very reluctantly gave way; but knew not how to state her fear of Lord Belmont's being of the party before her uncle and brother. Mrs. Valacort had no time for the gardens herself, but concluded Lady Saltland would be the *chaperon*.

When the barouche came to the door, however, Laura alone was in it. She had imagined that Mrs. Valacort, with whom she wished for opportunities to curry favour, would join them, when she saw no other *chaperon*; and had got rid of her mother by asserting that it was so settled. Being disappointed in this, she however quieted all scruples about propriety, by saying, that Lady Sabina had promised to follow, if they would wait for her in an alcove of one of the retired walks.

This impressed Emily with the dread of Lord Belmont's attending his lady; and she eagerly addressed an inquiry to her uncle, "Whether he never turned his horse's head that way?"

"Not often," he said; "but he was willing to do so, if she wished it."

As they were driving off, Lord Cranmore rode up, and, finding where they were going, asked leave to attend them?

which was readily granted, Henry accompanying the ladies in the barouche.

The plan of waiting for Lady Sabina was soon relinquished. Emily, ignorant of the etiquette of *chaperonage*, thought her uncle and brother sufficient protection, and Laura was very careless about the matter.

As they approached the parapet wall which opens the gardens to Hyde Park, they found themselves in a crowd, whose attention seemed fixed to something passing near the Serpentine River.—Inquiring what had happened?—

“ Some forlorn damsel making a gentle attempt at *felo-de-se* to excite compassion, I conceive !” answered a dashing man who, with his glass at his eye, was coolly contemplating the scene.

“ Gracious Heaven !” exclaimed Emily, turning deadly pale;—Lord Cranmore and Henry rushed out of the gardens, and were at the spot in an instant.

"For goodness' sake!" cried Laura, "don't let us make a scene here! she means herself no irreparable mischief, I dare say, or she would have taken her time better."

With a look of indignation at Laura, for this unfeeling speech, Mr. Valacort led Emily away to the bench opposite the door; who, though ready to sink, was straining her eyes after her brother and Lord Cranmore, wholly unconscious of having attracted those of all the surrounding men.

Lord Cranmore soon returned, eagerly exclaiming,—“She is not dead!—But I have, perhaps, taken an unwarrantable liberty with your carriage, Lady Laura, in having her put into it, to be conveyed to a medical acquaintance of mine, not a hundred yards from the Park gate.”

Emily's approbation of his zeal and feeling was strongly expressed in her countenance.

" It will not be very comfortable for us to get into afterwards, I fancy," was Laura's observation, " though we shall have the resource of Sabina's; only, I dare say, it's all a trick, and one hates to be the dupe of that sort of thing."

Lord Cranmore cast a contemptuous glance upon her, and told Emily, " All the account he could obtain was, that the unhappy girl had shown evident symptoms of derangement before jumping in, and had been quickly taken out, but insensible, and continued so: no one seemed to know any thing of her, and nothing was found about her by which she could be recognised; she seemed young and pretty. Villars has taken charge of depositing her at my friend's, who is an eminent surgeon and a very worthy man; if she be recoverable he will spare no pains."

When Henry returned, he reported that the surgeon was fortunately at home, and showed the most compassionate at-

tention to her, and all proper means were resorted to; but, when he came away, she remained insensible, and the surgeon begged to see Lord Cranmore when he left the gardens.

“ He might be very sure I intended it,” was the answer.

Lady Sabina at length appeared; and a gentleman, who had ridden by the side of her carriage, having alighted to offer her his arm, Emily concluded it could only be Lord Belmont, and immediately said to her uncle, “ Now, that we can leave Lady Laura under the protection of her sister, we must advert to the hour, my dear Sir: I can very well walk back to Stanhope Street”.

“ It is, indeed, time,” replied Mr. Valacort; “ and possibly there may be no objection to your having the use of the disqualified carriage, as Lady Sabina’s is here; *you* will have no fears, Emily, of the traces the poor creature may have left.”

"They were guarded against in the first instance," said Lord Cranmore; "she was wrapped up in the coachman's great coat."

The arrangement was acceded to, and Lady Sabina entered the gardens leaning on the arm—not of her husband, but of the Duke of Ulswater.

Her Ladyship was coldly civil in her notice of Emily; till, upon Lord Cranmore's saying something in her ear, she seemed to recollect herself, and, in a more obliging manner, apologised on the score of her miserable morning sufferings, for not having called in Stanhope Street.

Emily, far better pleased to receive the apology than the visit, replied, with her usual sweetness; adding an acknowledgement for the obliging offer of the horse; which produced an indication of surprise that did not escape her notice, and satisfied her that the offer had been made without Lady Sabina's sanction; a

slight inclination of the head was the only answer.

Lord Cranmore having put Emily into the barouche, left her to go and see after the poor rescued girl; and Henry then informed her of some farther particulars. "When Lord Cranmore first interfered, there was one young man remarkably assiduous about the apparently lifeless object, which naturally led to our inquiring whether he were any ways connected with her: No; she don't seem to be known to any body, was the answer; but no doubt that young spark looks for his reward if she can be recovered, for she's very young and pretty. Upon a nearer approach Lord Cranmore recognised him for a determined profligate, and he observed to me, 'the poor creature may be recovered to a worse fate! We can secure her against that at least!' Advancing, therefore, with an air of authority, he said, 'I know something of this unfortunate girl; be so good as to make way, that I may see

proper care taken of her ;' and beckoning Lord Saltland's servants to him, who had joined the crowd, he sent one of them for the coachman's box-coat, with orders for the barouche to draw up to the rail ; and then seeing her carefully wrapped in it, he directed the men to take her to the carriage, leaving the charge with me of conducting her safely to the surgeon's, whilst he returned himself to satisfy your anxiety, that life had not fled."

Emily expressed her approbation of Lord Cranmore's proceedings, with a warmth that delighted her uncle, although unconscious herself of all that it betrayed. Her esteem was indeed increased by every opportunity that offered of comparing him with other young men.

She enjoyed a most comfortable interval of quiet, during her aunt's *morning* visits ; at whose return towards seven, Mr. Valancourt was summoned to attend his niece to the opera. I have stopped the carriage to

take you," said Mrs. Valacort, " that you may have overture and all : I am determined to give you a surfeit at once ; but Emily, you are not half sufficiently dressed : we shall proceed straight from the opera to Lady Watson's supper."

Emily looked surprised. " I thought, my dear aunt, it was near one, when my uncle came back on Tuesday."

" Well ! what then ?"

" That would be Sunday morning, you know."

" Pho, nonsense ! it won't prevent your going to church : Chalmers tells me you are always up by nine, whatever time you go to bed ; so go and ornament yourself a little more."

" Forgive me, my dearest aunt, if I for once resist your commands : my going to Lady Watson's supper can neither be of importance to her, nor to any one else ; and indeed it is very important to me not to do what I think wrong, even if I thought it erroneously."

Emily so eminently possessed the *fortiter in re* with the *suaviter in modo*, that Mrs. Valacort gave way ; and said, “ The carriage shall bring you home, then, when you have set us down : to be sure nobody should do what they *think* wrong ; that makes all the difference. I wouldn’t do that myself, but I am convinced there is nothing wrong in it.”

“ I hope you have duly weighed *both* sides of the question, and then conviction may be a sure guide,” replied Emily rather seriously.

“ Well, well ! don’t you be righteous over-much, Emily ! for I give you my word the world won’t bear with that at all.”

Emily thought the world acted very much in character in endeavouring to put righteousness out of the question ; but having carried her point, she judiciously let the argument rest for the present ; and having received very strict injunctions *not to sit forward in the box*, till her aunt

should join them, “as that was deemed improper until it had the sanction of the *chaperon* ;” she promised obedience ; and set off with her uncle, not a little struck with the things that *are* considered of importance in this great world, and those that *are not*.

## CHAP. XIII.

COLONEL MAXWELL came according to his appointment, and rejoiced to find it a *tête-à-tête* dinner: "For I am anxious to have some serious conversation with you, respecting your pretty niece," he said.

"You would be a good deal surprised," said Mrs. Valacort, still a little provoked with Emily's resistance, "to discover what a fund of self-willed obstinacy lurks under that air of persuadable sweetness, that leads one to expect she would give way to every body."

"I exactly read in her countenance," returned Colonel Maxwell, "that species of genuine sweetness of disposition, that will give up her own pleasure to any

one; but her sense of right to no one: very different from that indiscriminate good nature we are apt to extol in the world, as easily persuaded into a bad action, as out of a good one."

" I see she has very completely fascinated you, be she what she may."

" She has, upon my soul! and that makes me anxious to talk to you."

The call to dinner here interrupted him. When the servants were withdrawn, he resumed the subject by observing,

" Lord Cranmore appears to be very seriously captivated by Miss Villars."

" I hope he is; and a very well assorted match it will be. Lionel and I were talking it over last night: she'll make a very pretty peeress; and they may set about reforming the *beau monde* together, for they are both so desperately good, and moral, and religious, and all that sort of thing."

" I wish from the bottom of my soul, *he* was all that sort of thing," with a

half smile “ that *she* is ; but there’s a sad spoke in the wheel, that her nice sense of right and wrong will hardly get over.”

“ What do you mean ?”

“ Have you never heard of Mrs. Sidney ?”

“ Lord ! who cares about a Mrs. Sidney, when marriage is in question ? she’ll be provided for like other Mrs. Sidneys ; and better, for the Kingsboro’s are as rich as Jews, you know.”

“ But this is not a Mrs. Sidney in the common run. If money could have satisfied her, Cranmore, I’m told, has made her the noblest offers ; but she is passionately attached to him, and a woman of such respectable conduct — ”

“ Respectable conduct !” interrupting him ; “ bless my heart, Maxwell ! how can you talk such nonsense of a kept woman ?”

“ I really believe I am doing her no more than justice, except in the one instance of her weakness to him ; and

there are some interesting and extenuating circumstances belonging to *that*, I am told, but of those I am not quite master. What I know to be fact, however, is, that she is treated not only with affection but respect, both by Lord Leonard and an old general officer related to the Marchioness, who has expressed himself strongly upon the subject in presence of a friend of mine."

" Ridiculous stuff!"

" She leads a life of absolute seclusion, and is a most attentive mother to two lovely children, a boy and a girl."

" Good Heavens! could any body bear the idea of his disgracing himself by such a marriage? marking the prior misconduct of his wife, moreover, by the distinction between untitled and titled children! I give you my word, Maxwell, that indulgent as one is obliged to be in the world, I hold the present bare-faced introduction of illegitimate children to be far more pernicious in its

effect upon good morals; than even matrimonial infidelity, where appearances are saved."

" I won't dispute which may be the worst of two things so very bad ; only I admire your newly awakened zeal upon the subject," smiling : " I conclude you have intimated it to General Falkland, that he may make over his pretty daughter in future to some greater latitudinarian in morals."

" Now I could kill you for that saucy speech ; for you know very well how often one is obliged, in conformity with the world, to act contrary to one's own view of things ; and she's an elegant inoffensive girl, and the General is a distant relation, and very rich —"

" Say no more ! say no more ! that last argument is of such acknowledged weight, what child of this world could set it at nought ! But seriously, whether any body may go so far as to wish Cranmore to marry this woman, I cannot say :

what I have heard asserted is, that his marrying any other will break her heart; and just so much I wished you to know, before you suffer that lovely girl's affections to be irretrievably engaged; for it is evident that he is over head and ears in love with her."

" Well then, seriously, I shall take it extremely ill of you, if you give the remotest hint to Emily of what you have now been telling me; for she is such a romantic little enthusiast, that there is no knowing what effect it might have upon her."

" You may rely upon my not taking the liberty of going one step beyond what I have done in a matter of such extreme delicacy; but I could not feel satisfied that you should be unacquainted with what might be productive of much misery, if discovered too late."

" To tell you the truth, I am quite a fatalist with respect to marriage. I think all interference useless: what is to

be, will be; and you will be quite a convert to my doctrine, when I inform you how unaccountably Lionel and I were brought together."

" Well, try your hand," he replied, a good deal provoked with her impenetrability to what he deemed of such moment, but fully aware he should do no good by pursuing the subject.

As her faith in fatalism, as well as her zeal for good morals, both seemed to originate in the eager wish for the union she had in view; and that it is most likely the reader's opinions will not be shaken by her '*argumens en l'air*,' it may be more interesting to suppress the remainder of this conversation, and inquire with Lord Cranmore after the poor rescued girl.

The report of the surgeon was so far favourable, that the vital powers were rapidly resuming their functions; but no symptoms of sensibility yet appeared to any thing about her; she groaned

heavily ; had opened her eyes without seeming to see, and that was all.

Lord Cranmore determined to wait till some appearance of returning consciousness should give a chance of obtaining what might guide his further proceedings respecting her.

At the end of about an hour, the surgeon informed him, that she seemed to be muttering indistinctly to herself, but took no notice of any questions put to her. He then went up with the surgeon ; on their opening the door she turned her head to look at them, but immediately turned back to the posture she had been in.

The surgeon inquired how she found herself? to which she made no reply.

Lord Cranmore had a remarkably agreeable toned voice, and with an expression of much kindness, repeated the question ; she seemed struck with the sound.

“ Vastly well,” said she, with a very

quick motion of her head to look at him. After a little pause, “ You see I did quite right,” she added.

“ In what ?”

“ In jumping into the water, to extinguish the flames.”

“ What flames ?”

“ Dear ! what a question ! why the flames my clothes caught from my mother’s bed, to be sure.”

A compassionate glance was exchanged between Lord Cranmore and the surgeon : hoping, however, that by continuing to make her talk, something might be discovered, he resumed,

“ Had you ran far before you reached the water ?”

“ Farther than I shall tell you, mayhap.”

“ Won’t your mother be uneasy at your absence ?”

“ Very likely ; but there’s no help for that, you know.”

“ If you will tell me where to find

your mother, I will let her know you are safe and well."

" Will you? so do, then; it will be very good-natured of you."

He stopped for some time, hoping she would say more; but she had again turned from him.

" Where shall I send to your mother?"

" O dear! it would be a very good joke to tell you that: thank you for nothing!"

" Why, where would be the harm of it?

" I should be found out directly, you know."

" And would your mother be unkind if she found you out?"

" How can you think of such a thing? She never was unkind to any body in her life."

" Why are you unwilling she should find you out then?"

" Dear! how dull you are! it's *him* that I'm afraid of, if I must speak out."

" And would your mother tell *him*?"

" How do I know? He made just as great a fool of her, as he did of me: he'd wheedle the heart out of any one: but I've nicked him now, you see; so it's all very well that he betrayed his purpose."

" If you will direct me to your mother, rely upon it he shall not know where you are."

" I wonder what business it is of yours, after all: you are one of the smooth-tongued ones, I see:—like him for that: but I shan't be taken in again, I promise you."

" It is my earnest wish to serve you, if you will tell me your mother's name."

" A pretty story, indeed! that I should tell you what she has taken such pains all her life to conceal, poor soul! No, no! not quite so weak as that neither; so you may as well go about your business, for not another word shall you get from me, I can tell you;" and turning her-

self entirely away from him, she again began muttering indistinctly, and paid no further attention to any thing he could say.

"We shall obtain nothing more for the present, I perceive," said the surgeon; "this is possibly only temporary alienation: care and quiet may produce something better to-morrow."

Lord Cranmore mentioned his solicitude to rescue her from the profligate young man, who was busying himself so much about her.

"Your Lordship may rest assured she shall remain in safety here, till we can learn something more of her," said the worthy man. "Young, pretty, and innocent as she appears, she must soon be enquired after in some way or other, that may guide our further proceedings. My wife and daughter will be at home in the course of the day, and will pay her every attention; I can answer for them."

They then agreed upon the advertise-

ment to be inserted in the newspapers, respecting her.

Lord Cranmore enjoined him to spare no expence in getting whatever might be necessary for her, as well as placing a careful person about her; and then prepared himself to go and make his report to Emily at the opera in the evening.

She asked whether he thought that a female might inspire confidence to make her more explicit? as she seemed to apprehend some snare; adding, “ I should very much like to try my influence.”

“ I have every reason to think *that* irresistible,” he replied; “ but we must endeavour to be sure of the poor girl’s real situation, before it could be proper to let you approach her: we have a good old housekeeper who may possibly succeed better with her than I have done. I will get her to go to her to-morrow, if the surgeon has continued to fail in obtaining any thing more.”

Lord Cranmore's delicate attention to propriety, upon every occasion, made its due impression upon Emily.

Mrs. Valacort arrived at the half of the second act, attended by Colonel Maxwell. "Have I at last succeeded in being in time for the duett?" said she, as she entered the box.

"It is just over," Mr. Valacort answered.

"Well, then, I give it up; for never, by any chance, can I expect to be earlier than to-night."

"Do you much care, dear aunt?" Emily asked, with something of an arch smile.

"Certainly, because every body talks of it, and one likes to have something to say."

"If that's all, I should think a suggestion from Valacort might answer your purpose," said the Colonel.

"Why, perhaps it might do as well, if not better," she answered, laughing;

"you know I don't pretend to love music, or be a connoisseur ; I'm sure I needn't ask how Emily has been pleased ; I see it in her countenance."

Never indeed had Emily passed an evening of such uninterrupted, exquisite enjoyment : passionately fond of music ; to hear the perfection of composition performed in a style so perfect ; to have her uncle join in all her raptures, and the intervals filled up by interesting, agreeable conversation—produced altogether a calm delight, that beamed in her eyes, and was reflected in those of Lord Cranmore to a degree perfectly satisfactory to Mrs. Valacort.

"I advise you not to let orangeade or ice approach the lips of that pretty creature, during her stay amongst us," said Colonel Maxwell to Mrs. Valacort, in a half whisper, not meant to be unheard.

"Why? there would be no living in such heat and crowds without them!"

“ Because she will assuredly be poisoned, in revenge for being such a living satire upon the times; offering so striking a contrast, by the attractive elegance of her modest costume, (Emily's style of dress was equally chaste and well-fancied,) to all the picturesque *Torso's* so unreservedly exhibited by misses and matrons, stripping ‘*a qui mieux mieux*’ for the public benefit, dear liberal souls! Pray Heaven they may but know where to stop !” with a very arch glance at Mrs. Valacort, who, though somewhat short of fashionable exposure, was considerably scantier of covering than her niece.

“ A truce to your sarcasms! *Monsieur le mauvais plaisant!*”

“ Nay, the *mauvaise plaisanterie* is in your wicked imagination: I only venture to hint a tender alarm at the increase of this classical taste for the suppression of drapery; and wish to put Miss Villars upon her guard against what may be expected from the mamma's who shall

find her monopolising the admiration, for which they are letting their daughters forego what was once the acknowledged characteristic of Englishwomen."

"Upon my life, you are become a most intolerable cynic, Maxwell! I shall quite hate you, if you encourage this girl in all her prudish singularities," Mrs. Valacort answered in a slight tone of pique; for Emily had actually stood a little contest with her upon the subject.

"Indeed I should deserve the fate Colonel Maxwell deprecates," she said, smiling; "if I had the presumption to affect singularity: I merely wish to escape notice, by adhering to what I have been used to think right."

"If it amounted to *marked* singularity, I should not so much admire it; tho' faith! in the cause of modesty, it might claim exemption from censure, too! but the fact is," appealing to the men in the box as he spoke, "that her appearance is eminently

fashionable, as well as elegant ; is it not exactly what every father and brother must wish, for those in whom they are interested ?”

Lord Cranmore’s eyes sparkled delighted assent, but he did not trust himself to speak. Mr. Valacort nodded and smiled : he remained silent, however, from unwillingness to wound his wife.

“ What a triumph it will be to Marianne when she sees Miss Villars !” Colonel Maxwell continued.

“ Pho ! *she* is a rank blue stocking, and singularity is their element,” Mrs. Valacort replied.

“ You would ascribe her unmodish deviations to a better cause,” he returned, “ had you witnessed the shock she received in our trip to Paris, during the peace of Amiens ; from seeing a female at the *Institut*, in so statue-like a costume, as caused us to turn away our eyes, in as much disgust as I discovered just now in those of Miss Villars, at the first ap-

pearance of the undressed dancers; but this *par parenthese*; the shock I alluded to, arose from the observation we overheard a Frenchman near us make to his companion : ‘*C'est effectivement, un peu fort, mais que voulez vous? c'est le 'nud Anglois :' nous nous copions mutuellement tout en nous detestant.*’”

“ Pshaw! I don’t believe one word of it!” cried Mrs. Valacort: “ it would be too bad to have the reproach of indecency retorted upon us from thence!”

“ It’s fact, upon my honour! \* but having named Marianne, puts me in mind to request, that you will allow me to gratify that best and most amiable of human beings, Lady Sarah Maxwell, by introducing Miss Villars to her acquaintance.”

“ I protest I don’t know that I shall,” replied Mrs. Valacort: “ why she’s ab-

\* A fact, indeed, to which the author had the mortification of being eye and ear-witness.

solutely ‘ nine times dipped,’ and the Phœnix of the sisterhood into the bargain ; and this strange girl has this very day been asserting, that she knew more happy old maids, than wives ; and instanced a foolish relation of hers, for one ; who tries the patience of all about her fifty times a day.”

“ Not one of us ever saw *her* out of humour, tho’, or heard her utter a censorious remark,” interrupted Emily.

“ But you’ll acknowledge that she’s a perfect fool, my dear !”

“ In that case, matrimony would not have inspired her with wisdom,” said Colonel Maxwell : “ I am quite on your side of the question, Miss Villars, the decided champion of the sisterhood ; and will not even allow my excellent aunt to be the *rara avis*: I can produce a phalanx of them, from her own society.”

Emily gave him a look of such delighted approbation, that he exclaimed, “ Such another look as that, would be

enough to constitute me '*Avocato del diavolo*,' if his Holiness proffered it to me : not," added he, laughing, " that I meant to insinuate, my spinsters lay on *that* road ; for I do seriously contend for their pre-eminence in various ways over the same number of wives taken at a hazard : do but consider how much good temper must be retained from the avoidance of matrimonial squabbles, and squalling brats : in short, Miss Villars, if I may introduce you to Lady Sarah's *coterie*, I will show you a dozen at least of the most cheerful, sensible, happy looking beings you can desire to see."

" And you can seriously be satisfied," said Mrs. Valacort, " to let her train your niece to the same forlorn prospect of single blessedness ?"

" Upon my soul, when I look round upon the men and women of our gay circles, I shrink—"

" Hush ! hush !" cried Mrs. Valacort, " you inveterate compound of prejudice

and formality ! You incorrigible *old bachelor* ! in short I won't let you say another word ; ” and turning abruptly to Lord Cranmore ; “ do you go to Lady Watson's supper ? ” she asked.

“ I — I hav'n't determined,” was his hesitating reply.

Mrs. Valacort had been so struck upon coming into the box, with her niece's good looks ; that she could not resist making one more attempt to persuade her to go ; and had begun with him, in the hope of getting an auxiliary.

“ Now, Emily,” she proceeded ; “ here's the opera over ; it has but just struck eleven ; the ballet you care little about ; five minutes stopping at home would add all that is needful of ornament to your dress ; we might still be at Lady Watson's before twelve ; and I will only take one turn through the rooms with you, and not stay supper myself : you can make no possible objection to this ! ”

“ The very great one, my dear aunt,

of interfering with your pleasure; beside my reliance on your promise, of letting me off, when I pleaded this cause before leaving home: but how comes the opera to end so much sooner to-night, than it did on Tuesday?"

" O! because of the absurd and provoking interference of the Bishops, you know," appealing to Colonel Maxwell.

" Aye, weak men! fancying that by sending the fine world away from the opera-house, before Sunday morning, they could find no better resource than going home!" he replied.

" My dear aunt, grant me in this case the benefit of clergy!" said Emily, playfully.

" You are a most impracticable girl! and yet there's no knowing how to be angry with you!" though Mrs. Valacort felt half inclined to be so; but the evident approbation in the countenances of the men, checked the expression of it; and she gave up the point.

" My Lord, I bespeak you for my beau ; and I'll carry you," turning to Lord Cranmore.

But His Lordship just then recollected it would be out of his power to attend her. As he put Emily into the carriage, he inquired where he might make his report to her, respecting the poor girl, next day ?

" O ! at home, I earnestly hope ; but it would be safer to ask my aunt."

" Till four, in Stanhope-street," said Mrs. Valacort, " and then in Hyde Park ; and then you know you are engaged to dine with us ; and in the evening you may attend us to the Sunday concert ; and afterwards to Lady ——'s, if you feel inclined."

" Not *us there !*" thought Emily ; " but it will be time enough to debate that point to-morrow."

## CHAP. XIV.

AT Emily's return from church, she found her aunt busily employed in routing through her secretaire to collect her bills. "Now you shall see," she cried, "how regular I propose being in future, in my household concerns; to guard against a repetition of this odious business of Walker's: you shall assist me in looking over these; and every fourth Sunday, I will make a point of settling with the housekeeper, and seeing that the bills are duly receipted. Well! why don't you commend me? I assure you I want encouragement to the task, for there's nothing I hate half so much as attending to money matters!"

"So that you inflict the penance upon yourself on a Sunday, in atonement for

not going to church?" said Emily, with a look half serious, half playful.

"Lord, child! you harp so much upon going to church: I hope you are not a slave to mere forms!"

"I hope not, dear aunt: I should conceive the form of going to church to be of very little use, if the heart did not prompt it."

"I'm sure it is easy to read a more edifying sermon at home, than is to be heard in most churches."

"Very possibly; but then the various occupations set apart for a Sunday morning in London, may so frequently engross the time appropriated for the edification—to say nothing of the benefit of example."

"Indeed, Emily, I begin to fear, that with all your serio-playful treatment of this subject, you are in danger of becoming a Methodist, if you are not one already."

"I have proved myself so ignorant of the value of terms here, that I am al-

most afraid to assert what I am. Pray are all those reckoned Methodists, who make any difference between Sunday and a week-day, in London?"

" No, no ! there ought to be a difference, assuredly ; and I would have you to know I am far from being unmindful of it ; and whenever I can get away without giving offence, I make a point of being at home earlier on a Saturday night than on any other, that my servants may go to church, if they choose it ; and I pay for a pew for them, that they may have no excuse : so I attend properly to *their* religious duties, you see, whatever I may do to my own."

Emily was too much grieved with her aunt's inconsistency, and levity, on so important a subject, to pursue it ; unless she could have hoped to lead her into more serious views, than could be expected with her head full of this pecuniary misfortune, for she was going on rummaging.

" Pray, are Lord Cranmore, and Sir Edward Arundel, reckoned Methodists, dear aunt?" she however asked.

" Not that ever I heard of: why?"

" Because they really behaved at chapel this morning as if they meant something more than mere form, by going there."

" Come, let's get through this troublesome job ; and if there's time afterwards, you shall see that I am not quite so bad as you seem to suspect ; for you shall read me one of those new sermons you were praising."

Emily's hopes awakened by this little concession: she would fain have begun by securing the time for the sermon; but did not urge it when objected to; judging that her aunt, like a child, might possibly be led by gentle degrees into doing what she would set her strength to evade, if too seriously enforced: the hold which the world had taken upon an understanding not naturally deficient, was so power-

ful, as to leave no opportunity for reflection to come in aid of better thoughts.

The clear-headedness of the assistant, made much quicker work of the business than might have been expected ; and the loss sustained by the ‘ trifling oversight,’ as Mrs. Valacort called it, of not casting her eye upon the bills when returned to her, to ascertain their being receipted; amounted, in the course of the three months, to considerably more than a thousand pounds. Her husband’s forbearance increased the delinquent’s sense of her carelessness; and she was sufficiently vexed to form very pious resolutions of greater accuracy in future; which her niece still hoped to improve into obtaining the substitution of an hour in a week-day, instead of church-time on Sunday, for carrying into effect.

The sermon was then read,—and, moreover, attended to and liked; for Emily read remarkably well. Then came the whole train of notes to be answered, about that ‘ tormenting private

box,' which Mrs. Valacort scarce ever thought of occupying herself, but which was an appendage of *ton*, not to be relinquished: it was, however, refused to all applications this week, that Emily might have her choice of what she would see.

"And now for the drudgery of writing some hundred 'At home to masks.' I shall see masks on Thursday," said Mrs. Valacort.

"Is there any chance of our getting through all this Sunday-morning business in time for me to engage your private ear for an hour, my dear aunt? I am very desirous of imparting some things that you ought to know, both respecting Sophia and myself."

"O, certainly; and I am all impatience to hear them:—that shall be during our airing in the Park: here, you know, we are never secure from visitors; and I couldn't bear to have the conversation interrupted."

There were means of security that might have been resorted to, Emily thought;

but she soon found it was the morning of habitual call of some distinguished visitors, who were not to be denied ; and she saw her aunt's mind was completely engrossed with settling who was and who was not to be invited to see masks ; so that it could not be expected, family-occurrences should take place of business that seemed of such importance : she therefore quietly submitted to await the airing.

Lord Cranmore called at his return from Knightsbridge, where the old house-keeper had, by his directions, gone at an earlier hour. Poor Patty (so they afterwards found her name to be) had seemed pleased at the sight of her, and asked, “ If she were sister to Mrs. Hickson ? she was dressed so like her.”

“ Barnes, hoping to obtain some information by humouring the idea,” Lord Cranmore said, “ acknowledged herself a relation ; and added, I hope Mrs. Hickson is your friend ?”

“ Yes ; but if it hadn't been for my lady. I should have got no great good by that.”

" And won't my lady be anxious to know what is become of you?" Barnes asked.

" Perhaps she may," she replied, thoughtfully.

Barnes then offered to write and inform her ladyship of her present abode; to which she seemed assenting: but, when the pen and ink were brought, she suddenly exclaimed, " O, no, no!—you know, well enough, my lady can keep nothing from Hickson, and Hickson can keep nothing from George, and so I should be obliged to run away again; silly, silly girl, to be so taken in—I see your drift, fast enough!" and she burst into a flood of tears, and would give no farther answer; and in this state I found them," he continued, " Barnes endeavouring to soothe, but the poor girl quite incoherent; till, upon my dismissing the old woman, she, with great eagerness, demanded a solemn oath, that she would not inform Mrs. Hickson

where she was. Upon this being complied with, she became quieter, but would take no notice of me whatever."

All that fell from the unhappy girl seemed not only to denote her virtuous, but anxious to continue so; and Emily again urged her wish to try her powers of persuasion with her, to which he now felt inclined to give way; they were settling the mode of proceeding, when Mrs. Valacort interfered, and strongly objected to exposing her niece to an encounter with a mad woman; if, indeed, it were not, after all, a mere take-in; for she found it so impossible, she said, in this great town to distinguish real objects from impostors, that she made it a rule, never to trust herself in the way of imposition, but confined her benefactions to the public charities, that must, doubtless, be well regulated.

Lord Cranmore did not dispute the prudence of the proceeding, nor make any observation upon the possibility of

mismanagement, in charitable institutions; but simply stated, that nothing had yet made it clear this was a case for charity, except of opinion, and for that he somewhat warmly contended; and was seconded by Emily, who was not easily deterred from an act of humanity, but stood firm against all her aunt's arguments, even when she brought forward *en dernier ressort*, the royal ticket of admission to the rehearsal of the Ancient Music, which she had obtained for the next morning.

Lord Cranmore pledged himself for the safety of his charitable associate; answered for the attention of the surgeon and his family, who should be stationed within call; and, at last, so far conquered opposition, as that the carriage was allowed to be ordered at twelve the following day to carry Emily upon this alarming expedition.

A succession of visitors now filled up the time till the hour of resort to the

Park, where the confidential communication was to take place in the midst of the whole fashionable world; but here again a disappointment awaited Emily, who was not a little surprised to find that what had been called *an airing*, terminated in a *stand still* along the railing in the Park that reaches from Hyde-Park-corner to Grosvenor-gate; closed in, by all the equipages and four-in-hands in town, and attracting all the gentlemen on horseback to take their station by the side of the carriages for the benefit of conversation. Of course, every man of Mrs. Valacort's acquaintance came up in turn; and it would have been far more impracticable to pursue any interesting conversation here, than with the interruptions to be expected in Stanhope-street. An air of vexation stole over Emily's features in spite of her endeavour to suppress it; which Mrs. Valacort perceiving, said, "I really did not intend getting into this, for it is often

attended with danger, and I am rather a coward; but our being so late made it impossible to get on, or we should simply have driven round the ring, seen this curious spectacle at a distance, and conversed uninterruptedly, and at our ease."

Colonel Maxwell now came up to the side of the carriage.

" You might as well come into the barouche to us, Maxwell," said Mrs. Valacort, " and see us safe out of this *bagarre*, which, to say the truth, I did not quite mean to bring Emily into."

The Colonel very readily obeyed.

" Surely," said Emily, " I must be mistaken in what I fancy I see! for it appears to me as if the coachman of that stage-coach, which seems to be set fast among the carriages, was kissing his hand and nodding to you, dear aunt."

" You are only mistaken in what you conceive him and his carriage to be," said Mrs. Valacort, laughing; " it is Lord Mortlake: would he could have

overheard you ! he would have taken it as the highest compliment that could be paid him.”

“ Is it possible ?”

“ Look a little farther,” said Colonel Maxwell, “ to that open barouche-landau, and you’ll see something better again ; you see a female on the box next the driver ; that’s Sir Timothy and Lady Dashfoot ; and the inside of the vehicle is occupied by the coachman and two livery-servants.”

Emily’s hands and eyes were raised in wonder.

“ And, what’s more still—so emulous are the whips of this high-minded generation of rivalling their coachmen in every way, that they do not omit the accompaniment of a quid of tobacco ; and one, has so far outstript his compeers, as to have had a front tooth extracted that he might dispose of the result of his chaw in the most unquestionable style.”

"Are you not practising upon my credulity?"

"I wish, with all my soul, I was; for, I vow to Heaven, the follies of the age make me almost ashamed of belonging to it: and yet you have not heard all; for there is a select four-in-hand club established, where none but *professional* language is spoken; and any man expressing himself like a gentleman would be expelled, as derogating from the spirit of the noble institution."

Emily literally remained silent from astonishment.

The danger Mrs. Valacort had anticipated was speedily verified; her carriage got so locked in with others, as to be raised from the ground in the attempt to disengage it; and her terrors and screams (which speedily brought flocks of men to their assistance) now as much surprised her niece, as her calmness among the evening cuttings and lashings had done before; not yet aware how much the

consciousness of exciting interest, increases the fears of fine ladies.

Being finally extricated with safety, and returned to Stanhope-street soon after six, the confidential hour was at length secured before the business of the toilet required their attention ; and Emily related all the family anecdotes she thought it necessary to impart ; amongst which she made lighter of her own conduct, with respect to Charles Belmont, than any other biographer would have done : indeed, he was now so lowered in her opinion, that she did not estimate the sacrifice at the height it deserved when she made it ; neither did she represent in its strongest light the levity of his so speedy transfer of affection to Lady Sabina ; but she most earnestly entreated for Mrs. Valacort's concurrence in checking the impropriety of his present conduct, which she stated forcibly as she felt it ; and it roused very just indignation in her aunt, accompanied with the

promise of taking every method of keeping him at a distance.

Of Lord Leonard Ormsby's attachment to Mrs. Delmere, and her decided rejection, she also spoke ; but there Mrs. Valacort's ideas differed widely, indeed : she could think it little short of madness in Sophia to reject such a lover, and upon so absurd a plea ! however, she recommended it to Emily to urge her sister's taking a house in town the next winter, as the most likely means of putting an end to such unaccountable vagaries.

She was bent upon finding some other grounds for Sir Edward Arundel's attentions, than mere concern for Agatha ; but he had thus far been so much upon his guard, that whatever Emily's wishes might be, she did not flatter herself with his having more than a very respectful friendship for her sister.

" Well ; and now have you told me all ? " Mrs. Valacort continued.

"I believe so," said Emily.

"What! does poor Lord Cranmore go for nothing?"

"I have nothing to tell about him."

"Do you mean that he never occupies your thoughts more than any other given person?"

"O no; I don't mean to say so: for he occupies them more than almost any body I am acquainted with."

"Come, you are an honest, open-hearted girl, after all! notwithstanding your formality and prudery. So then, he need not be very apprehensive of a repulse when he comes to open his mind?"

"He gives me no reason to think there is any thing to open his mind about; the distinction he pays me is very flattering, because I think it indicates esteem; and his mind seems to me so much above the common level, that I quite dwell upon it with admiration; but, I hope, these sentiments are admissible on both

sides without implying any thing one need hesitate to acknowledge."

"Well; we shall see how that may be," Mrs. Valacort replied, with an incredulous smile, but cautious not to say any thing too pointed just yet.

"But you accused me of prudery, dear aunt,—what do you mean?"

"Why don't you see that it's the general custom for women to shake hands with every man that comes up to them? but you draw back as if you had never been in good company before."

"Indeed, I shook hands with Sir Edward Arundel."

"And is he the only privileged man in the world? You held back from Sir Tristram Traverse, at the Duchess's."

"And is it not allowed here to distinguish a friend, from a coxcomb? If I were to become so very fashionable all at once, what would they say at my return home? Have patience with me till Sophia and I become town ladies together, next

winter, and then you shall see how we will polish each other!" and she put an end to the discourse by observing how near it was to dinner-time; so they adjourned to their respective toilets.

A dinner of twelve covers was an unavoidable Sunday occurrence, Mrs. Valacort told her niece, when they again returned to the drawing-room, "as Saturdays and Sundays were the only free days for members of parliament."

In the evening, Emily pleaded hard to be excused from the concert; but this was inadmissible; liberty having been obtained to introduce her as a special favour: for the concert was limited to subscribers. "It was quite a ridiculous scruple," Mrs. Valacort said, half angrily, "when majesty itself countenanced Sunday evening music; she hoped Emily did not think it necessary to exceed them in piety!"

Emily would not have been at a loss for her reply; but she was not willing to

displease her aunt for trifles and forbore arguing the point. She only stipulated, therefore, to be set down *at home* after the concert: no fear of displeasure would have driven her to a *card* party; and to this, though somewhat reluctantly, Mrs. Valacort at length agreed.

## CHAP. XV.

THE following morning punctually at twelve, Emily set out for Knightsbridge, and found Lord Cranmore at the surgeon's door, waiting to hand her out of the carriage.

Favourable symptoms had continued to increase ; the nurse reported that after having cried unceasingly for some hours, Patty had fallen asleep ; and when she awoke, appeared to be conversing with some one she conceived to be at her bed-side ; but in such a way as could not easily be understood, only she seemed as if listening to receive answers : since which she had been extremely composed, had arisen and dressed herself, but declined leaving her bed-room. She had ex-

pressed a wish to have some plain work given her, which had been indulged. She had voluntarily taken some breakfast, and sat close to her needle ever since; did not speak, however, or seem to take notice of any of the family.

Emily desired to go to her alone.

As she entered, the poor girl raised her eyes, and fixed them upon her face, with an expression of pleasure. Emily was struck with something of a resemblance in her to Agatha Arundel, and felt an increase of interest from the circumstance.

"I am glad to find you at work, Patty," she began.

"Why, yes:—because now it's all settled, and that I am to stay here; I must do something for my board, for I've no money, you know."

"And who has settled it all for you, Patty?"

"My mother and the angel."

"Where did you see them?"

"O! here,—as soon as I awoke this morning. And do you know, when you opened the door, I thought they were coming back again, you look so very like him." Again fixing her eyes with a pleased expression upon Emily's countenance, who, more gratified by the prospect this idea offered of gaining upon her confidence, than by the unintentional compliment to her beauty, answered in her kindest tone, "You are certainly so far right in the likeness, that I come, like him, to do you good if I can."

"Thank you," was all the answer: and she resumed her work in silence.

After a considerable pause, Emily continued, "Patty is a pretty name, I think."

"I used to think so when he spoke it; but I wish I could change it now." And she gave a heavy sigh.

"Have you no other?"

"Yes! yes! but, you know, I mustn't tell it."

“ Why not ? to a friend !”

“ Why, because of my poor mother, you know.”

“ Would she be angry ?”

“ O dear, no ; there’s no anger in Heaven ; she’s there now : that’s what she and the angel came on purpose to tell me ; and that I needn’t mind having burnt her in her bed,” (poor Emily shuddered,) “ because it had purified her from the sins that used to weigh her down so sadly.”

“ I can see no reason why you should not answer my question ; I only want to find out how to serve you.”

“ Why, that’s very good of you ! and you look as if you meant me kindly. But, dear, there’s no trusting to looks, you know : only think how George used to look !” and she laid down her work and crossed her arms with an air of deep melancholy.

“ And was he not kind ?”

“ Why, how can you ask such a ques-

tion? Could any thing be worse than to set about ensnaring me in that cruel way! but I was too deep for him, though poor mother would never have found him out, you see." She now became very thoughtful, and it was long before she would again attend to any thing. At length she said, "I've been thinking that I had better write, and give him some good advice."

"You can't do better," replied Emily, bringing her the writing materials.

"O dear! but that would betray where I am; and, as soon as ever he finds that out, I must be off again."

"But you are with friends that will take care to let nobody come near you whom you do not wish to see."

"Am I? O, then, that's all very well." She now again took up her work, and remained silent.

Emily put the ink-stand towards her; but she took no notice. At length, giving up the hope of obtaining any thing

farther by her stay, she rose to leave her.

"Patty looked up with extreme quickness, exclaiming, "O! you are not going to leave me, are you? I thought you were my good angel."

"I will stay, if you will tell me what I can do for you; but if you are afraid to trust me, I may as well go."

"O! no indeed! I will trust you with every thing in the world." She held her hands before her eyes for some minutes, as if trying to collect her ideas; then, bursting into a passion of tears, she exclaimed, "O dear! what shall I do? I'm afraid my poor head isn't right, for I can't remember any thing in the world!" And she continued to weep as if her heart would break.

The door of the room had been left ajar for the surgeon to be within hearing; he now made a sign to Emily to come away; "I will see you again to-morrow," she said, as she was going, "and, by

that time, you will have recollected what you wish me to know."

"But will you, indeed, come back to-morrow?"

"I will, indeed."

"Tell me your name then."

"Emily Villars."

"Emily Villars, Emily Villars,"—she went on repeating to herself, in the midst of her sobs and tears, as long as they were within hearing.

The surgeon considered her as in a more promising state than he had yet done. Her consciousness of the alienation, was a favourable symptom, and subsequent quietness might confirm it; he had therefore beckoned Miss Villars away, he said, lest any unintentional allusion in the conversation might have again touched upon the fatal spring of her malady.

Emily asked whether she might not return the following day? and was told it must depend upon circumstances, which Lord Cranmore undertook to ascertain at

an early hour in the morning ; and his report was to determine the farther proceedings.

The report of the following morning was satisfactory. She had been rational at intervals during the remainder of the day ; passed a quiet night, and awoke with a perfect recollection of Emily's promise, and extreme impatience for its fulfilment. She had made no inquiries where she was, nor would give any other answer to the questions put to her, but that 'she should tell Emily Villars.' She still refused to quit her room.

When Emily again appeared, she seemed struck with awe on beholding her ; as if she were then first aware of the difference in their conditions. She arose, laid by her work, fixed her eyes steadily upon her as she curtsied, but remained silent.

" You see, I have kept my word," Emily began ; " do you not recollect Emily Villars?"

"O dear, Ma'am!—but you are a lady; what right have I to trouble you with my distresses?" and she wept.

"I told you truly that you should find me your friend; never mind, therefore, whether I be a lady or not; tell me how I can serve you, and you shall find I will."

"Why, Ma'am, if you will please to give me work—and not let any body know where I am."

"You may rely upon being supplied with work, and your abode shall not be betrayed to any one you wish it to be kept from."

Emily stopped, hoping she would name whom she dreaded; but Patty remained silent, and seemed lost in thought; after a considerable pause, she at length said, "I can't imagine how I came here!"

"You were brought here by a friend, who is as ready to serve you as I am."

Again she sunk into a deep reverie of some continuance, and then, with a be-

wildered air, she fell a-crying, and said, “ O Ma’am ! I’m afraid, I have done something very wrong !”

“ What makes you think so ?”

“ Because, when I saw my poor mother burnt, just after I had found out George’s treachery, I know I thought I must go distracted ; but I don’t know what I did afterwards, nor how I could get here.”

“ Well ! never mind how you got here, since you have been taken good care of ; we’ll talk of that some other time : tell me, now, whether there wasn’t a lady in your neighbourhood that was very good to you, and that will wonder what’s become of you ?”

“ O yes, Ma’am ! Lady Sarah was always very good to me indeed ; but then it would not be safe to tell her where I am, because of Mrs. Hickson.”

“ Did Mrs. Hickson bear you any ill-will ?”

“ No ; but she’s so foolishly fond of

George Fenthams” — she stopped, and coloured up to her eyes.

“ He is her relation, is he ?”

“ Her nephew, Ma’am ; but little could she have suspected — ” again she stopped in extreme confusion.

Fearful that the agitation might produce wildness, Emily wished to lead her thoughts back to Lady Sarah, and asked, whether she was not an uncommonly good woman ?

“ O dear, Ma’am, to be sure ! Lady Sarah Maxwell’s goodness spreads far and wide ; nobody ever heard of her, I believe, but might see cause to bless the day.”

Most agreeably did the name strike on Emily’s ear : “ Where is her house in London ?” she inquired.

“ In Wimpole-street, Ma’am. But, dear lady !” imploringly, “ don’t let her know if I have done any thing very wrong ; for, indeed, I must have been

out of my mind, after all the trouble she took to teach me what was right ; but, in truth, I did not set fire to my mother's bed on purpose, only, when I found out George to be so bad, I didn't know what I did ; so, perhaps, I might, and it don't all signify now, you know, since she has told me how happy she is in heaven."

Poor Patty again relapsed into incoherency ; Emily, however, was satisfied she had obtained enough to enable her to be of essential service ; and determined to go straight to Wimpole-street to impart what had happened, and learn what was to be done ; and she left the surgeon's, unperceived by the unhappy girl.

Emily ordered the carriage to Lady Sarah Maxwell's ; and, upon sending up her message, was immediately admitted.

It appeared, that the cottage inhabited by Patty and her mother had been burnt down ; but there was no reason to suppose any lives had been lost ; although

neither mother nor daughter had since been heard of, they had both been seen during the fire. Lady Sarah described Patty as an interesting innocent girl, very affectionately devoted to a poor broken-hearted mother, who had met with some cruel usage in early life, which she had never got over ; her name was Benson : no symptoms of insanity had ever been manifested in Patty ; of George Fenthams attachment to her, Lady Sarah knew nothing ; he was her housekeeper's nephew, and she believed rather a profligate young man ; she would make particular inquiry respecting him ; for Patty had always been a great favourite with her ; and she had been much concerned at her disappearance, and wondered how the advertisement in the newspaper came to have escaped her notice. Upon examination it proved that, by some inadvertency, it had not been inserted in her paper. She proposed sending Mrs. Hickson to the poor girl directly ; but to this

Emily stated the objection; and requested a delay, till her mind should be more composed.

Miss Maxwell came into the room, Lady Sarah named Miss Villars to her, "Niece to Mrs. Valacort, I am quite sure!" said Miss Maxwell; "your confinement to your bed, Ma'am, has prevented you from hearing my uncle mention the pleasure he had in view for us, in making this acquaintance; for there is no mistaking his description of Miss Villars."

Emily's cheek mantled with pleasure, at having been favourably spoken of, by the Colonel, of whom she thought highly: there was a prepossessing openness of countenance in Miss Maxwell too, and a frankness of manner, that instantly won her confidence; and she felt she had got among kindred minds.

All that related to Patty was now fully and duly canvassed; and Emily, extremely delighted, to find the interest she had felt so justified; gave way to her kind

feelings in their fullest extent; and returned to Stanhope-street with her head full of plans, which, however, must await the perfect restoration of their object, before any of them could be even proposed.

She found Lord Cranmore with Mrs. Valacort anxious for the result of her inquiry; but her aunt was exceedingly discomposed at her having gone alone, to a person with whom she was unacquainted. Emily had conceived that the errand upon which she went, would have been a sufficient plea for intruding anywhere. Mrs. Valacort dwelt upon the strange appearance it must have to Lady Sarah Maxwell, that she should not have gone to introduce her niece.

" It could only impress her with compassion for my ignorance of the ways of this great world: she looked to me like benevolence personified! as if she couldn't put an unfavourable construction on the actions of any human being.

I think, I never saw two more charming people in my life than Lady Sarah and Miss Maxwell!"

"Aye, exactly what I anticipated! Now shall I have you drawn headlong into blue-stockingism!"

"Indeed, if these be specimens, I shall not be very desirous to keep clear of the prognostic!"

"No!—specimens! no such thing; these are actually decoy-ducks! be assured the generality of them are made up of pedantry and affectation."

Emily now made her report of Patty, which highly gratified Lord Cranmore; but Mrs. Valacort had scarce patience to hear it to an end; so provoked was she, at all the precious time this business had taken up; the necessary consequence of which must be the curtailing one half of the things that ought to have been done; or it would be impossible to get to Covent Garden by the middle of the

second act, which was the interesting moment.

"I wonder at the practicability of ever getting there at all," Emily observed, "according to the general arrangement of hours!"

"Nothing so easy," Mrs. Valacort replied: "it is but ordering dinner an hour later than usual, not staying the farce, and delaying the toilet for the evening engagements till after coffee."

Lord Cranmore was appointed to meet them in the box. Lord Belmont had called, Mrs. Valacort afterwards told her niece, "making a pretence of wanting some parliamentary information from Lionel, to fish out the routine of our evening engagements; but I foiled him."

There was one sentence which she had overheard him utter at the Duchess of Castlehaven's, which had occasionally recurred to the thoughts of Emily: "Her friendship," he had said, "might have

had a salutary influence upon Lady Sabina, and, by that means, have reconciled him to his fate.” Were it, indeed, possible this could be his object, it might deserve consideration.

She stated her doubt to her aunt ; who, upon this occasion, was better qualified than the guileless Emily to form a just opinion ; and found very little difficulty in satisfying her, it was merely thrown out as a snare, and intended to be heard by *her*, though addressed to Colonel Maxwell.

## CHAP. XVI.

THE business of the evening was managed without interruption or difficulty ; and Emily's looks and spirits being fully restored, she appeared so very lovely, that her aunt set forth to her assemblies in delightful expectation of the effect she would produce ; nor was her expectation now balked. The general disappointment in Emily's appearance at the Duchess of Castlehaven's had since caused her to be as much cried down as she had before been cried up ; but on this night she found her true level ; and obtained all the admiration she was justly entitled to excite. The open expression of it, however, was so new to her as to prove very distressing ; and

greatly did she rejoice when she finally made her escape from it.

On the following morning she returned to Knightsbridge ; and a sense of disappointment stole over her mind upon alighting at the surgeon's, from the absence of Lord Cranmore, who had, hitherto, always been awaiting her arrival there ; it soon gave way to very different feelings, however, when the surgeon's wife, a plain, well-meaning, worthy woman, came forward to inform her of His Lordship's goodness. He had put a fifty-pound note into her hand for Patty's use ; adding, at the same time, that now she had protection so much more suitable than that of a single man, he should content himself with hearing occasionally from Mrs. Dunbar how she went on.

The delicate attention to propriety which every new occasion brought to light, gained upon Emily's esteem faster than she was herself at all aware of.

"His delicacy equals his humanity," she replied.

"O dear, Ma'am, if you knew all the instances Mr. Dunbar could give you of that, you would think as we do, that his equal is not to be met with far or near."

Poor Patty seemed more collected than she had yet been, but her spirits were proportionally sunk: she deplored the death of her mother, whom she believed to have been burnt, but could give no distinct account of how the fire had occurred, "because of the state of distraction," she said, "into which George's ill-usage—or rather her discovery of his bad designs, had thrown her."

There was no venturing as yet to undeceive her respecting her mother, whose fate, at any rate, was also uncertain; and the surgeon had repeated his caution to avoid as much as possible agitating subjects; so Emily only endeavoured to soothe, by turning her mind to religious consolations; and assuring her she had

fallen into the hands of excellent people, who would show their good-will in every way she could wish : she expressed her gratitude, accompanied with strong ejaculations that she might be saved from ever seeing or hearing of George Fenthamp more !

She entered into no details of his misconduct, however, nor was it desirable to let her pursue the subject. Before leaving her, Emily ventured to name Miss Maxwell. “ Miss Maxwell was all goodness ; but she would tell Mrs. Hickson—” and she now became somewhat incoherent, which made it seem advisable that Miss Maxwell’s visit should yet be deferred.

Part of the business allotted for this morning was, the visiting the exhibition of water-colour drawings, in Brook-street; and here Lord Cranmore was found. Emily spoke her sense of his conduct respecting Patty, with a warmth that first conveyed to his heart the delightful

conviction of having awakened her interest, for him. A glow of animation overspread his countenance as his intelligent eyes riveted themselves upon her face, with an expression of such extreme tenderness, that hers were fain to seek the ground : blushing to an almost painful degree, she endeavoured to divert his attention, by calling it to a beautiful landscape before which they happened to be standing. Lord Cranmore's name upon it showed him to be the purchaser : she made the observation. . “ There are finer performances in the collection,” he said ; “ but this had an irresistible attraction for me ; can you guess it ? ”

Emily recognised a resemblance in the fore-ground to one of her Devonshire sketches, and, recovering a little self-possession, she answered, “ It is very flattering to my sketch, that you thought it worth remembering.”

“ The difficulty would be ever to forget — ”

The approach of others, checked the conversation; but a sort of understanding was taking place between them that did not require the assistance of words.

Mrs. Valacort, very well satisfied with the appearance of things, had loitered away as much time as she could contrive to bestow upon what she cared so little about; when it luckily occurred to her, that a stroll in Kensington Gardens might be well-timed; nor was she inclined to make the smallest objection to Lord Cranmore's proposal of going in at the Bayswater gate, and confining themselves to the more rural and unfrequented walks.

As they were alighting, Colonel Maxwell came up, having, at Lady Sarah's desire, taken his ride round by Knightsbridge to inquire after Patty Benson. Mrs. Valacort invited him to join them, took possession of his arm, and kept him in full conversation during their walk.

The nightingale was pouring forth his richest melody: spring smiled in her freshest loveliness: all nature seemed to harmonise with the exquisite sensations hope had now called up in the breast of Lord Cranmore. Many an apt allusion, and many an impassioned vow, found its way through the (not very reluctant) ear of Emily, to a heart every way formed to appreciate the sterling worth that here assailed it. Nor let that heart be censured, for over-readiness in admitting tender impressions: be it recollected, how the kind affections in which it abounded, had been thrown back upon it, by the unworthiness of the object that had first obtained them; and how naturally they must revert to one, who, in every thought and action, offered a contrast so immediate, and so striking. Scarcely had a day passed since her acquaintance with Lord Cranmore, which had not afforded some occasion of raising him in her esteem; independently of that witchery, which so

often stands in lieu of all other merit; the perfect devotion of true love, that shone forth in his every look and motion.

If these considerations prove insufficient to acquit Emily, to those rigorists in Cupid's code, who deem it profanation to admit more than one genuine passion in the same breast, I know not what farther to say in her behalf; for that she was as truly attached to Charles Belmont when she so magnanimously relinquished him, as she is now in danger of being, to her new lover, is a positive fact; though it may be pleaded, in mitigation of censure, that at this period, her feelings were by no means as clear to herself, as to her biographer.

The morning ended as usual in a course of visits. As they were driving away from one of them where they had been let in; Emily observed, “What admirable command of countenance you have, dear aunt! I’m sure, I must have betrayed my surprise.”

" At what?"

" At that curious transaction about the Opera tickets."

" I didn't take notice of it."

" Did you not see some, lying on the table?"

" Yes. What then?"

" Did you not hear the lady who came in, express her wish for a box to-night?"

" I think I did."

" And didn't you hear the answer that was made?"

" No. What was it?"

" These are our box tickets, which neither my colleague nor I shall use to-night; I am just going to send them to Hookham's: if you drive straight there, you may secure them and the box. We don't suffer him to charge more than the fair subscription price for ours.' Good heavens! you don't look astonished, now! —at women of fashion *selling* their Opera tickets!"

Mrs. Valacourt fell a laughing: "What, you think it desperately mean, Emily?"

"I protest, I felt myself colour with shame for her,—and so, I thought, did the lady, who probably expected an offer of the loan of the tickets, when she began her speech."

"No; the lady knew better, I promise you. Why, child, it's what every body does, and it would be absurd to make a scruple of it."

"Then, I must say, I glory in observing that my dear aunt does not allow herself to do things, that she is willing to excuse in others. You have *given* your box for Saturday."

"I have not the least ambition of being thought better than my neighbours. '*Il faut hurler avec les Loups,*' that's my maxim; and my motive for *giving* my box will lose all its merit in your romantic eyes, my dear, when I tell you, that its my mode of keeping some vulgar distant

relations in good-humour, for not being invited to my parties."

Emily looked as she felt, disappointed by the explanation. "And, after all," continued her aunt, "what is there more in selling your Opera tickets, than in opening your house to a subscription concert? from which you derive the advantage of amusing your friends at another person's expense: you might as well call *that* letting out your house by the night!"

"And not be very wide off the mark," thought Emily; but she was silent, perceiving, in her aunt's eagerness of vindication, that she would be hurt at her dissent.

Mrs. Valacort being of opinion, that her niece must have had quite enough of the Opera, having once sat it out, from beginning to end, now settled her evening plans according to their accustomed routine; which took in the last half act; and the best part of the ballet. She

was willing, however, for once, to stay it *all* out; to show Emily the humours of the “crush-room,” as Miss E—— has so happily named it. Having apprised Colonel Maxwell of this intention in the morning, he determined to attend upon them; to guard the timid little rustic from what she might there have to encounter.

Nothing, however, beyond the usual shoving and elbowing occurred; except a more than common quarrel among the coachmen in the street; in consequence of which no one got away for more than an hour. The affray ended by the loss of a wheel to one carriage; by another having its pannel smashed; and by the coachman who had begun the broil (in cutting across the line) having forced on his horses with such violence, that he could not save one of them from spiking itself upon the iron rails; by which means it was all but killed. This last disaster being imparted, with some appearance of concern, by a gentleman

who had been spectator of the mischief, to the lady who owned the equipage; she, with admirable calmness, answered, “ ‘Tis of very little consequence, they are only jobs !”.

Emily, who was within hearing, and had shuddered at the account, literally started with surprise at this answer.

“ You are not aware,” Colonel Maxwell observed, “ what a school of philosophy the world is.”

“ I desire, Maxwell, you will be sparing of your sarcasms,” said Mrs. Valacort, as he put them into their carriage: “ she is but too well inclined to reprobate manners that, after all, must be given way to ; for, of all things, I should hate to see her affect singularity.”

“ She will never affect any thing, if I read her right ;” he replied ; “ but she has bewitched Lady Sarah and Marianne in her short visit ; so you must allow me to take means of following up the acquaintance, by bringing my niece to your breakfast-table to-morrow.”

Miss Maxwell expected afterwards to have accompanied Emily to Knightsbridge ; but the opinion of the surgeon being stated, that plan was delayed : a very earnest petition was then preferred, for the pleasure of Mrs. Valacort and Miss Villars's company to a small party, Lady Sarah had collected for the evening ; and Mrs. Valacort, too well-bred to betray the reluctance she felt ; gave way, with a good grace, to Emily's eager solicitude to accept the invitation. She did not, however, fail, as soon as they were alone, to caution her against accepting other invitations which this might lead to, amongst 'so quizzical and pedantic a set.'

Emily's pleasure equalled her surprise, at the contrast between this reprobated society, and that to which she had hitherto been introduced. They drove up to the door without risk of neck or limb, and found elbow-room and good sense within ; titled and untitled people, whose names were familiar to her ear, and ex-

cited her curiosity both to see and hear them ; interesting, agreeable conversation substituted for the eternal repetition of, " Are you going to Mrs. this?" — " Have you been at Lady t'other?" — " Dreadful getting up!" — " Expected a pole through the pannel every moment! — and, nobody here, after all!" These, with the various comments upon dress and beauty, that naturally follow, had constituted the whole amusement as far as had appeared in any of the assemblies they had yet frequented ; and very warm was the defence Emily made, of the party she had so greatly enjoyed, when her aunt now endeavoured to attach ridicule to it ; and very earnest was her entreaty to be permitted to frequent, as occasion might offer, society so much more suited to her home-bred taste.

" Aye ! this was just the provoking result Mrs. Valacort had foreseen ; but she could assure her she had seen by much the best of them at Lady Sarah's."

## CHAP. XVII.

THE preparations for seeing masks had obliged Mrs. Valacort to give up her bed-chamber, to complete the suite of apartments ; in consequence of which, she slept upon the second floor, and the staircase to it, was a continuation of the backstair.

As she was going down to breakfast, she had stopped to give some farther orders to the new housekeeper, who was attending her ; and, in looking back to her, she missed a step — and only saved herself from coming down headlong by catching hold of the baluster ; by which means she gave herself a twist, that sprained her ankle, and broke her right arm.

Here was a most unlooked-for check to all pleasurable proceedings. Not immediately conscious, however, that the bone was broken, Mrs. Valacort proposed putting the arm in a sling, and lying upon a sofa with the sprained ankle; in preference to putting off the expected company, "for which there was so little time; and the world would be so disappointed — and the amusement would charm away the sense of pain."

Mr. Valacort happened, unluckily, to be out of the way. Emily, however shocked, at this tenaciousness of amusement, could make no head against it by herself: but she had sent off for a very able auxiliary in the surgeon. A—C— pronounced it to be a fracture, ordered her immediately to bed; and, whilst he was attending to all the various exigencies of the case, Mr. Valacort came in; and received strict injunctions to keep the patient perfectly quiet, as the most likely means of averting the violence of the fever which, he apprehended,

pain would soon bring on. Most reluctantly did Mrs. Valacort give up the point of the masks being admitted, without making her accident known; and “any very delightful ones might be introduced to her bed-side,” she said; but their being let in, at all, was so peremptorily over-ruled, she was at length obliged to submit. And, indeed, pretty severe pain soon came in aid of the surgeon’s authority. Emily anticipated a miserably protracted recovery with so refractory a patient.

The fever ran quite as high as had been foreseen; and Emily was unremitting in her attendance.

As she was one day sitting by the bedside, in anxious hope, of the invalid awakening refreshed from a doze she had fallen into; a letter was put into her hand. It was from aunt Katty.

As it has already appeared that she valued herself upon her ‘knack in letter-writing,’ it will not be doubted that she began in the proper style of an apolo-

getical exordium, followed by all the ‘hope’ and ‘trust’ respecting Mrs. Valacort’s recovery, that the case naturally called for; all of which was duly ornamented with a redundancy of capital letters, dashes, and flourishes that might have emulated the *lac d’amour* of Mad. de Sevigné’s Princesse de Tarente. The first page being thus filled, very much to her satisfaction, she proceeded to say:—

“ Things go on with us here pretty much in the usual way; though I must confess that, what with one thing or another, we are all a good deal out of sorts. My poor brother being confined to his bed with the gout in his feet and knees; but when I see him getting low, I exhort him to be cheerful, and set him the example; for, as I tell him, let what will betide *me*, he should never find me like that Patience in the play, you know, ‘sitting moping in green and yellow on the monument:’ so that made him laugh and say, in his funny way, ‘The D——,

Katt! that would be a ticklish seat for your little round person, indeed!' and I was very glad I had thought of any quotation to amuse him ; and, I pray God, the disorder may not be getting up into his head and stomach : but, as I tell him, if it should, it is the will of Heaven, and, as such, we must submit to it.

" Talking of that puts me in mind that we have no supply of flannel in our school ; and I saw an advertisement of a cheap shop somewhere in Wapping ; so, whenever Mrs. Valacort takes her airing that way, I should be glad you would make purchase of a piece.— Well, then, to go on with the family history, there's my poor sister can't attend upon her husband herself, being laid up with rheumatism in her head, and, as I tell her, I shouldn't wonder if it turned to a rheumatic fever ; and I have been persuading her to take some of Steer's opodeldic, or of the *Kayer putty* thing, you know, that comes from the Indies ; and the worst of

all is, that my niece Delmere, who would be of so much use in all this distress, is confined at home, on account of poor dear little Aggy's shocking accident;—so take it altogether, to be sure it's dismal enough: but they wish it to be kept from you, so pray take no notice in your answer, my dear; only I thought it would be agreeable to you to know the truth."

She then proceeds with all the gossip of the village; ends her letter in style, by catching at a fortunate word, to give a happy turn to the conclusion: after which follows the postscript.

"P. S. I can't find the newspaper for the direction about the flannel, and I've forgot the name of the shop and the street, but suppose anybody thereabouts will be able to tell you. And I hope and trust, my dear niece, you won't make yourself uneasy at what I have been telling you about our distresses here, because that might spoil your plea-

sure in London sadly, which I should be very sorry for. And I forgot to mention that my niece Delmere is in great distress besides, on account of Winny being obliged to go home to her mother, because her sister is dead, and Aggy takes on so shockingly at parting with her."

Emily was thrown into a state of extreme agitation by the contents of this letter : her anxious wish to fly instantly to the succour of the invalids at the Priory, was combated by a keen sense of the cruelty she should be guilty of to her aunt, who seemed to rest solely on her, for every comfort under her present sufferings. In this dilemma her brother found her, when he called to make his daily enquiry after Mrs. Valacort.

Having read the letter with much attention, he was of opinion, that one-half of the alarm might fairly be placed to the account of aunt Katty's mode of seeing and describing ; and having called

to his sister's recollection various instances of the inaccuracy of her statements, without being able entirely to tranquillise her, he kindly offered to set out himself immediately; with the promise of making a faithful report, by which she might be guided in determining upon the most urgent claims to her care. This she thankfully accepted; and soon succeeded in recovering sufficient apparent composure, to conceal the whole matter from her aunt, till she should have more correct information.

As Henry was hurrying from the door, he was met by Sir Edward Arundel, to whom he imparted his proposed journey, and its cause. The unexplained accident, which was stated to have befallen Agatha, awakened so very lively an interest in his hearer, that he declared, he could not rest satisfied without ascertaining the nature of it himself; and they accordingly set out together.

A very few hours brought them to the Priory ; and their fears were considerably alleviated by the very first object that caught their eye, which was Agatha, bounding along the lime-walk, with the activity and playfulness of a young fawn, and Katty waddling after her ; who, the moment she recognised them, exclaimed, “ Merciful gracious ! how surprising ! — What can have brought you so unexpectedly, Henry ? ”

“ Your letter, my good aunt.”

Nothing could equal the astonishment of Katty, into whose cloudy brain, cause and effect, had never yet found their way in due order.

“ My letter ! ” she cried, “ why I forbid Emily to mention a word of it ! ”

“ But it frightened poor Emily out of all caution,” he replied.

“ Why, then, I dare say she overlooked the postscript ; for in that I particularly charged her, not to let what I had told her spoil her pleasure in

London: so now you see the upshot will be my never telling her the truth again."

The truth, however, it afterwards appeared, was pretty much what Henry conjectured, that no cause whatever for alarm had existed. Mr. Villars's attack of the gout was the slightest imaginable; Mrs. Villars's rheumatism in her head, which was neither more nor less than the *tooth-ach*, was cured by the extraction of the tooth; and Agatha's shocking accident was a slightly broken shin, which had caused her aunt to keep her quiet one day, by confinement to the sofa.

During the dialogue between Katty and her nephew, Agatha had flown to Sir Edward, and was clinging round his neck (for it should have been mentioned that the gentlemen had alighted from their carriage on first perceiving them,) pouring all her fondness for aunt Delmere into his delighted ear; when she

herself came up, and expressed her pleasure on seeing them, indiscriminately to both, with frank and cordial kindness.'

A little less of such frank avowal, would have been more congenial to Sir Edward's own feelings. Still, however, he was sensible that acknowledged friendship, was a step gained ; but yet there remained much to be done before he could hope to ripen it into a softer sentiment, and his secret must continue to be carefully concealed.

Lord Cranmore had met the travellers just as they were stepping into their chaise, and renewed the friendly offer of his cottage for any time it might suit Sir Edward's convenience to occupy it ; and Sir Edward was always conscious of a something so remarkably salubrious in the air of the Hampshire downs, he told Henry, that he felt strongly inclined to remain ; and give his nerves a week's respite from the smoky atmosphere and hot rooms of London.

This proposal was strenuously encouraged by his friends at the Priory, in whom he had now excited a powerful interest for himself. And Henry returned to town without delay to quiet the apprehensions of Emily.

## CHAP. XVIII.

SIR Edward's week was imperceptibly verging to a fortnight; when, as he one morning pensively trod his accustomed path from Boxmount Cottage to the Priory, ruminating upon some possible plea, for still protracting his stay without giving rise to suspicion of his true motive; he was roused from his reverie by a concourse of villagers, and considerable bustle at the entrance of the corn-field through which his road lay.

On inquiring into the occasion, he was informed, that the stage, driving furiously down the hill, had caught the wheel of one of the machines in which wild beasts are conveyed for exhibition about the country; and upset it with a

violence that had thrown the driver from his seat in front, caused the door to fly open behind, and the cage containing the lioness being also shattered by the shock, the animal had got loose, and was tearing about the field; the danger much increased by the height of the wheat, which prevented ascertaining her track: the people, in their fright, had collected what weapons of offence and defence they could lay hold of, and were in pursuit of her.

Whilst giving ear to this account, his eye caught Sophia with a book in her hand, unconscious of the alarm, approaching the stile from the lane into the field on the opposite side. Darting across with the velocity of lightning, he called to her, to stop! but not catching his meaning, she got over the stile, and was moving towards him, when, thrown wholly off his guard by terror, he frantically exclaimed, “O, my soul’s idol!”— and reaching her at the same moment,

he caught her up, and, with supernatural strength, leaped with her in his arms across the stile, and fortunately perceiving a break in the high fence by the lane-side, he easily increased it, and put her through it, bidding her "take refuge in the barn;" which he had no sooner said, than he fell back against the outside of the paling himself, nearly fainting with the agitation and exertion, and unable to utter a word of explanation.

Sophia almost stunned with the rapidity of this extraordinary proceeding; and alarmed at the state in which she saw him, made an attempt to return over the paling to his assistance; when fright for her recalled his senses, so far as to enable him to make an effort to drive her back, with an agonized cry of "My heart's only treasure, for pity's sake remain!" and get over the paling himself.

The inclosure they were now in joined the farm-yard, and they sought security

in the barn ; where the farmer shortly after brought word that the creature was again in the custody of its keeper. The man had soon recovered the effects of his fall, and made his way to the scene of confusion, when the animal no sooner recognised him, than she came crouching to his feet, and submitted without resistance to be led back to her prison.

And here ended all fears for personal safety ; but alarm of a different nature had made its way to the bosom of Sophia. Sir Edward had only been able to attend her to the Priory, and thence hastened home in a state of most pitiable nervous debility ; disordered not only, by the agitation he had undergone, but by the overwhelming dread of having prematurely betrayed his passion.

Nor were his fears ungrounded ; the too tender epithets he had uttered, still rung in Sophia's ear ; and brought to her recollection various trifling incidents, which at the time had passed unnoticed,

but now recurred in “ confirmation strong” of his cherishing sentiments so inimical to his peace, that every feeling of friendship and humanity combined, to urge her immediate adoption of so decided a line of conduct, as would effectually check what, could only be productive to him, of a renewal of former misery.

The discovery was painful to her in the extreme. In the full reliance on her own unalterable faith, to the memory of Colonel Delmere, she had given way to sentiments of esteem and friendship for Sir Edward, without fear of injuring his tranquillity any more than her own by the confidential intimacy they had produced : a firm believer in the doctrine, that true love can be felt but once, and knowing what he had suffered in the cause, she had not considered this species of intercourse with him, in the same light in which she would have viewed it with any other man ; in short,

the peculiarity of their respective situations, had lulled her into security ; and the numberless amiable traits of character occasionally brought forward by Agatha, had imperceptibly softened her feelings towards him, far beyond her own consciousness of their nature ; for she rested her thoughts very much upon the great importance he must ever be of, to the future destiny of her little charge, and had of late cultivated his good-will with the most unsuspicious solicitude.

Now, however, that she so plainly saw how much he might have been deceiving himself, there could be no hesitation as to the manner in which she was called upon to act ; not, as in the case of Lord Leonard, with repulsive reserve, but a frank and friendly communication of her apprehensions, the very first opportunity that offered.

Sir Edward was far too much disturbed, to be able to join the society at the Priory that day ; and a night of feverish agitation ensued, which equally disqua-

lified him for stirring abroad on the next; by these means he had full time for deliberation as to his farther proceedings; and he honourably determined to abide fairly and unequivocally by the sentiments he had so involuntarily betrayed: could he have maintained his silence, it might have borne the interpretation of diffidence, even to himself; but now it became an act of duplicity unworthy of his character, to attempt to do away the impression his words must have excited. He must now come boldly forward with the avowal, and stand to the risk.

But with such a dread, however, of the result did he finally present himself before the sovereign arbitress of his fate, that a month's illness would scarcely have produced a greater alteration in his looks.

He felt somewhat re-assured by the friendly cordiality with which she acknowledged his most effectual protection against the danger that had threatened

her ; and he stammered out his apprehension of having undesignedly betrayed feelings that might offend her.

“ They grieved more than they offended,” she replied.

“ O reserve your grief for the day when I may *complain* of sufferings ; but grant me to devote my life to the attempt of gaining your favour.”

“ You have gained so much favour, Sir Edward, as would ensure your contributing materially to the comfort of my life, provided your wishes are confined to the enjoyment of simple friendship ; those I can frankly offer you, but beyond those *I shall never go.*”

“ I ask no more, till time shall have convinced you — ”

“ Time can bring no additional conviction with it,” she interrupted ; “ of your merits I am fully aware ; if it were possible I could think any man worthy to replace Delmere, *you* would be that man. I speak so frankly, that you may

give the more implicit credit to what I shall with equal frankness add ; my tie of fidelity to him reaches beyond this life. He never knew another love but me ; he has repeatedly sworn it, and if he lost me would vow eternal celibacy for the remainder of his days : could I fail to reciprocate the vow ? ”

Full well did Sir Edward know the fallacy of Delmere’s assertion ; but the sacredness even of past friendship sealed his lips ; his emotion, however, was very apparent.

Sophia went on : “ From an engagement such as this, I must cease to respect myself, before I could ever wish to be absolved ; the romance of my life shall be, to preserve my faith to him pure and unspotted as when I pledged it at the altar, until I reach that blessed state where our spirits may again be united in joys ineffable for evermore.”

“ Romance, indeed ! ” Sir Edward thought ; but he saw in the enthusiastic

turn of her mind, how much consolation she derived from this airy structure of her own raising. Incapable of seeking to obtain any advantage at the expense of her slightest gratification, he only replied, “ To the purity of your own mind I shall trust for doing justice to mine ; very undeserving should I be of the candour so exclusively your own, with which you now treat me, if I could cherish a wish beyond the high honour and inexpressible gratification of the sentiments you have condescended to avow. Believe me, Mrs. Delmere, I am not the slave of sense ; to be received, acknowledged as your chosen friend, to be allowed to study your happiness or pleasure in every action of my life — will give it a value so greatly beyond any thing I could ever again have hoped to live for, that I should never ask for more : grant me but unlimited confidence, and you will bestow happiness, exquisite and pure as your own lovely form and mind !”

" To any other than yourself, Sir Edward, I should hesitate to utter the observation I am going to make, lest it should be misconstrued ; but your mind is not cast in the common mould, you will not ascribe to female vanity what is the result of real solicitude for your happiness. Allow me to say, that your expressions were not those of simple friendship, the other morning."

" I will not attempt to mislead you, Mrs. Delmere, by disclaiming the feelings that actuated me, in that alarming moment ; but give me credit for the utmost sincerity, when I assert, that whatever I then felt, you have now changed its nature. I will not pretend to deny the purpose with which I this morning sought you, nor the pang I experienced at the outset of this conversation ; but your subsequent frank avowal of sentiments so congenial to every nobler feeling of my soul, seems to

raise me to an emulation with your own purity ; and trust me, you shall have no cause to withdraw your confidence.”

“ Do not attribute it to doubt of your sincerity, if I say, that so very sudden a revulsion would require a confirmation from time, to be safely relied on ; a temporary absence might give it stability—”

“ Absence !” interrupting her with a look of dismay, “ then you do not give credit to the disinterestedness of my feelings !”

“ Indeed, I give perfect credit to your sincerity in asserting it ; but a year or two would —”

“ Good Heavens ! a year or two !” turning still paler than when he had first come into her apartment ; “ the very thought is death !”

Sophia, hurt at the wretched expression of his countenance, and probably biassed, imperceptibly to herself, by something beyond what she believed to be her actuating motive, that of retaining him

within reach of extending his protection to Agatha as occasion might require, gave way to his objections with a facility her better judgment would have condemned, had it had fair play ; but when has judgment fair play against the plausibility of romantic deductions ? not certainly in such a headlong enthusiastic disposition as that of Sophia : so she finally agreed to his solicitation of being admitted to the confidential intimacy of friendship, with the freedom of a brother, until he should forfeit his privilege by the first symptom betraying a less disinterested feeling ; she was then without hesitation to give him notice of his failure, by recurring to the necessity of absence, to which he would submit without a murmur.

And the compact was sealed on the hand she held out to him in friendship ; but the kiss imprinted on it, had such a mixture of respectful timidity in its fraternal tenderness, as might have satisfied

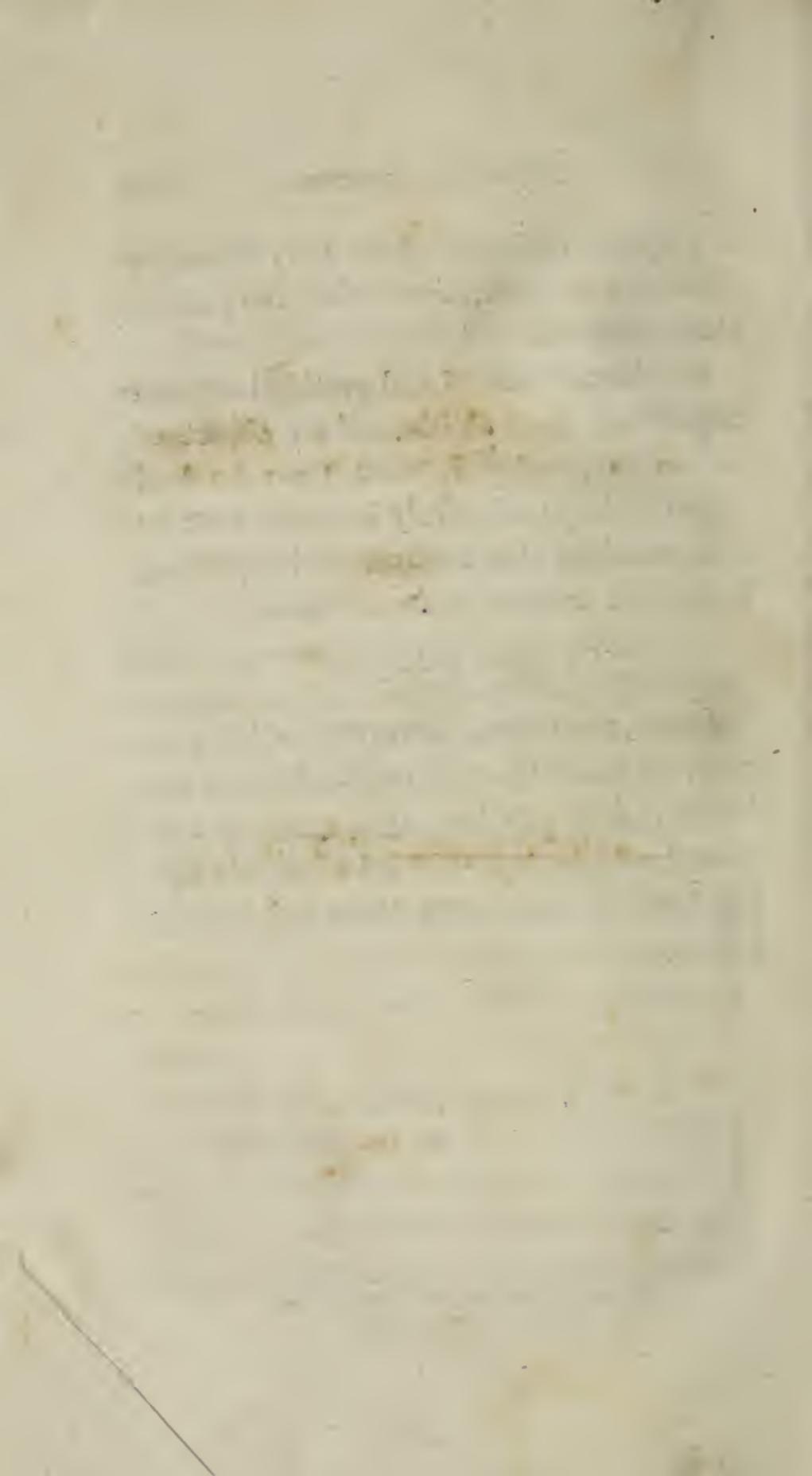
an impartial witness of the very different character it bore, from what the parties were aware of.

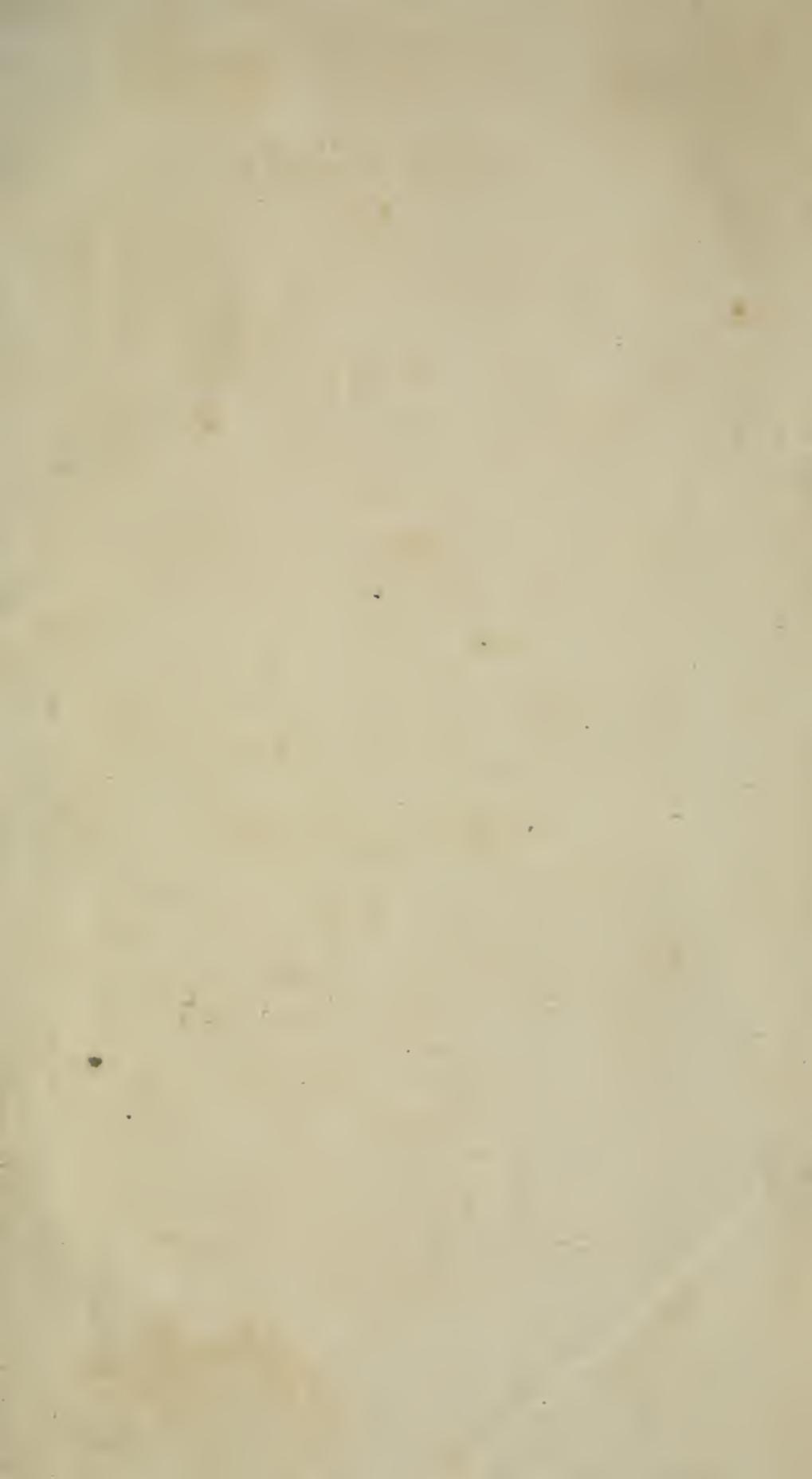
Sir Edward, raised and gratified beyond expression, to find himself an object of so much greater interest than he had dared to hope, sincerely believed that he had reached the summit of happiness; but, alas! in love, as in ambition,

“ On wishes, wishes grow.”

Leave we them, however, for the present, in the full enjoyment of their delusion: how seldom is happiness any other! and let us return to Emily's trying task of attendance upon her unruly patient.

END OF VOL. II.









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